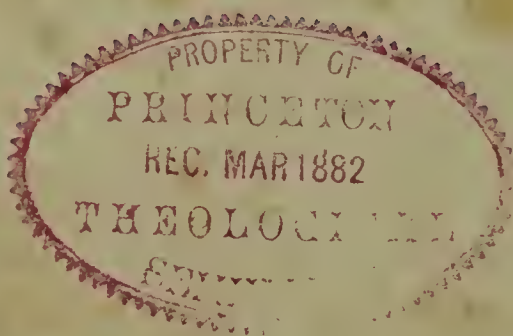


FREE CHURCHES.

SECOND THOUSAND.

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A Collection of articles on
free churches

A COLLECTION OF ARTICLES
ON
FREE CHURCHES:

BY
THE RECTOR OF A FREE CHURCH.

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"THE RICH AND POOR MEET TOGETHER:  
"THE LORD IS THE MAKER OF THEM ALL."  
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SECOND THOUSAND.

New-York:
DANIEL DANA, JR., 381 BROADWAY.

—
1858.

"MINE House shall be called an House of Prayer FOR ALL PEOPLE."

"THE POOR have the Gospel preached to them."

"FREELY ye have received, FREELY give."

"Make not My FATHER'S House an house of Merchandise."

"If there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him? But ye have despised the poor."

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
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THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

PREFACE.

THE interesting articles which have recently appeared in our leading Church periodicals, and the remarkable success which has attended the establishment of our Free Churches, have awakened the attention of earnest Christians, and aroused a spirit of inquiry which augurs the best results for the cause. Devout men everywhere are yearning, in the spirit of their LORD, to have the Gospel preached to the poor; and religious men, of all classes and schools, are beginning to feel that the *first step* to secure this blessed result is to throw open our Churches freely to the masses. For nothing is clearer, even to the most superficial observer, as the present Provisional Bishop of New-York has remarked, than that, in most Churches where the Pew System prevails, there "we see all those parts of the sacred edifice which are conspicuous, which are comfortable, which offer advantages for seeing and hearing, *monopolized by the rich*, held exclusively as private property by the rich, fitted up by them with every luxurious accommodation; while the poor and the stranger, if they can gain admission at all, are thrust off into some remote corner, where there are few comforts, and where it is almost impossible to see or to hear; and thus we behold, at first glance, in that holy assembly, a spectacle which flatly contradicts all their professions of humility and charity, which is an insult to the most glorious attributes of the Being Whom they profess to honor and worship."* Indeed nothing but pride, the prejudice of habit, and a strange forgetfulness of the fact that there is scarcely a Church in the land within the sound of whose bell there are not multitudes living as practically without God in the world as any of the heathen, would permit the Pew System to exist for a single day in any of our Churches.

In answer to many inquiries for a small book which would fairly present the cause, this work has been compiled. On a subject on which so much has been well said, it was with difficulty that a choice could be made. The following articles are among the best that have been printed. A few alterations in them have been made, to separate them from the local circumstances under which they originally appeared.

It is to be regretted that an excellent sermon by the Rev. H. N. Pierce, of Rahway, N. J., on "Free Churches the True Policy of the Church," could not have been included in the work. The author has kindly permitted the following extract from it, which presents an argument not met with elsewhere:

* Remarks in favor of Free Churches, by Horatio Potter, D. D. 1845.

PREFACE.

"Let me direct your attention to still another fact, which strongly indicates that the preaching of the Gospel to the poor is the *true policy* of the Church. Wealth is constantly changing hands in our age and country. Seldom do the accumulations of it remain long in one place. The descendants of the rich are the poor of the next, or of the succeeding, generation; and the grandchildren of the poor often become the wealthiest of our citizens. Society is a seething cauldron. There is an unceasing upward current, and one as ceaselessly moving downward. If, then, the Church desires to obtain the means for carrying on her great work, let her not look exclusively to the coffers of the moneyed man; but let her give her attention to the humbler classes. For, be ye sure that those whom the Church takes care of in their day of adversity, will, in the day of their prosperity, reward her sevenfold into her bosom. The bread cast upon the waters will be found again after many days—aye, the days may be few.

"And the view here presented suggests a reason why the man of means and of high position should not be backward in assisting in this good work. The hand of misfortune, nay, the providence of God, may yet thrust him down into the ranks of the destitute. The almshouse *has* been the last earthly home of many a man who once gloried in the abundance of his riches. But, granting that *he* continues to be prosperous, is it certain that the same will be true of all his descendants? Facts show that this is improbable, almost impossible. Your offspring will, in their turn, take their place among the *lowly*. It is, in part, for you to say, whether among the DEGRADED poor. In calling upon you, then, to advocate and support the preaching of the Gospel to the masses, I am but asking you to provide for the spiritual care of your own posterity. Will any man hesitate to guard against the degradation of his own flesh and blood? You can do it in this mode far more surely than by heaping up riches."

The compiler is well aware that to make our already established Churches free, difficulties will be encountered, and trials of faith must be borne. But what are they in comparison with the result to be gained?—Churches everywhere free and open to all for whom CHRIST died—the grave no longer the only place this side of Paradise where all men meet on an equality—the rich and poor mingling as one family in the house of Him Who made them all—the Gospel once more preached to the masses—and the Church becoming in reality, what she already is in the prayers of devout men, *the Church of the people*. Surely to such a cause no Christian heart will fail to say "GOD-SPEED"



ART. I.—FREE CHURCHES.

[From the Church Review, Oct., 1855.]

AMONG the many practical subjects to which the attention of the Church has of late been called, the principle of FREE CHURCHES has received considerable impulse. And we desire in the present article to discuss briefly, first, the principle, and secondly, its practicability.

In order that we may not be misunderstood, we desire at the outset to disclaim the idea that the Church of God knows any distinction between her members, but a distinction of holiness. We take our stand on the principle laid down in the Sermon on the "System of Free Churches," by the Rev. E. A. Hoffman :

"The Christian Church was intended to be Catholic or universal, not only in setting up the Cross in every land under the face of heaven, but she was intended to be Catholic, in that she was to gather into her *one fold* every human creature, without the slightest distinction of rank or sex, country or color. Her invitations to receive its blessings were made to all alike. No one was preferred before another. Here, each one, no matter what his condition in life, was sure, so that he lived godly in CHRIST JESUS, to receive an equal share of the heavenly blessing committed to her care. It is of this principle, the groundwork on which the Christian dispensation is extended to all, that Solomon speaks: 'The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the Maker of them all.' Both are God's workmanship. Both have the same Father, and, as we may now declare, the same Redeemer and Sanctifier; and both will, undoubtedly, receive an equal share of His sympathy and parental care."

And, to quote again from the same Sermon, we believe that,

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"It is at once the beauty and glory of our Church, that she has ever acted systematically upon this principle, and in the fullest spirit of her Divine Master. In her fold she knows no distinction between her members, except it be in respect of holiness and piety. At her hands they all receive the like consideration. She has no gorgeous ceremonial and resplendent temples for the rich, and 'ragged churches' for the poor. *Where her spirit is truly carried out*, be they princes, priests, or paupers, she has but *one worship* for them all, but *one altar* at which they may kneel, but *one cup of salvation* of which they may taste, and but *one blessing* which she can give.

'Our mother, the Church, hath never a child
To honor before the rest,
But she singeth the same for mighty kings,
And the veriest babe on her breast;
And the Bishop goes down to his narrow bed
As the plowman's child is laid,
And alike she blesseth the dark-brow'd serf
And the chief in his robe arrayed.

'She sprinkles the drops of the bright new birth,
The same on the low and high,
And christens their bodies with dust to dust,
When earth with its earth must lie;
Oh! the poor man's friend is the Church of CHRIST,
From birth to his funeral day;
She makes him the LORD's, in her surpliced arms,
And singeth his burial lay.'*

And therefore we hesitate not to claim *a priori* that any plan or practice which introduces distinctions of rank, or wealth, or favor, among those who are members of the Body of CHRIST, cannot be of Him Who is no "respector of persons," nor of that body which He purchased with His blood. And that this is the necessary result, in a measure, of the practice of selling or renting seats in the House of God, we believe that none can deny.

* Coxe's Christian Ballads; a sweet little book, which should be in every Churchman's Library.

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But we need not rest our argument on this. The principle of selling or renting any seat in the House of God meets with the most direct condemnation in the Word, of God itself. It is, in every sense of the word, merchandise, not only *in* but *of* the House of God. And hence, besides its general condemnation in the Bible, it is exposed to the severest rebuke which our blessed LORD ever used, when, on the only two occasions on which He used violence, He drove out from the temple, with a scourge of small cords, those that sold and bought in it, saying: "Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves." "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."* St. Mark xi. 17; St. John ii. 16. And what thoughtful man that has attended the worship of a Church where the pews are rented or sold, can read, without trembling, that Apostolic warning of St. James: "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the LORD of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto you assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under

* It may be urged that it is right to purchase pews if it be done for the purpose of worshipping God and supporting the clergy, and not for any private gain. So the traders in the Temple might have argued that the oxen, sheep, and doves were sold to be sacrificed to God; and the money-changers, that their trade enabled the worshippers to cast into the treasury of the LORD just the amount that each one desired to give. All this merchandise, which CHRIST condemned and cast out, was connected with the Temple service, and ought, if this argument is sound, to have been excused.

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my footstool : are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him? BUT YE HAVE DESPISED THE POOR.—If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, *ye commit sin.*”—ii. 1-6, 8, 9.

So long, therefore, as these texts stand on the page of inspiration, nothing can convince us that the Pew System is other than in direct opposition to the Word of God, and must therefore be a curse upon that Church which has in an evil hour consented to its adoption. “Alas! that these Scriptural views of worship should have been so sadly lost sight of in our days, that the equality of the Christian birthright is almost entirely ignored, Church-going expensive, and to maintain the respectability of a Christian worshipper now-a-days is attended with so much cost that the Apostles and the Seventy, if they were now among us, would be obliged to sit in the galleries or the back seats of our Churches, if, indeed, they could have any seat at all: for they were *poor men.*”*

But the question is sometimes asked, and that by devout persons: How came such a system, if it is in direct opposition to God's Word, to be grafted upon the Church? We can best answer this question in the words of Mr. Hoffman's sermon:

“In the earliest ages, and in the Churches which the Apostles

* Rev. A. N. Littlejohn.

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founded, the houses of God were as free as the air we breathe. There were distinctions, it is true, because of the crowds that thronged their courts—but they were distinctions of holiness, and not of wealth. The communicants, or the faithful, as they were then called, were placed nearest the altar; the penitents, or those preparing to become communicants, came next; while those who had committed great sins, or came as spectators, were placed near the door.* And so, or in some similar way, did the seats in the Churches remain free for more than fourteen centuries; and never, amid all the corruptions with which the faith was overlaid, did Christians attempt to sell seats in the Houses of God. The first inclosed pew that was known in a Church, dates back, says the author of the 'History of Pews,' only to the early part of the 17th century, half a century and more later than the Reformation in England. And they were never extensively introduced until the time of the Puritan rebellion, and then in opposition to the Bishops of the Church, by men who wished to conceal from the congregation that they refused to kneel during the prayers, or thought themselves too good to pray by the side of those who were poorer than themselves. So that, if we have read history aright, the Pew System was introduced in the darkest hour of our Mother Church—when her Archbishop was murdered, and her King martyred, by men who turned the noblest cathedrals into stables for their horses, the fonts into watering troughs for their cattle, and the holiest vessels of the altar into cups for their drunken debauches."

Again, the principle of selling or renting pews is all wrong, from the fact that we thus sell or rent that which does not belong to us. We are not speaking now especially of English Parish Churches, in which we believe it has been legally decided that every parishioner has a right to a seat; but of every building which has been consecrated by a Bishop, and so dedi-

* The ancient Churches, as the learned Mr. Bingham remarks, besides, the *bema*, or sanctuary, where the clergy stood to officiate at the altar, were divided into—1. "The *naos*, or temple, where the communicants had their respective places;" 2. "The *narthex*, or ante-temple, where the penitents and catechumens stood;" and 3. "Another ante-temple, or *narthex*," called *locus audientium*, and *locus lugentium*, where the hearers and those who were mourning for great sins were permitted to stand.—*Christian Antiquities*, Book VIII, c. iii, §§ 3, 4.

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cated to the service of Almighty God. "For by these solemnities," writes Wheatly in his treatise on the Book of Common Prayer, (c. ii. section ii. § 6,) "the founders surrender all the right they have in them to God, and make God Himself the sole owner of them. And formerly, whoever gave any lands or endowments to the service of God, gave it in a formal writing, sealed and witnessed (as is now usual between man and man), the tender of the gift being made upon the altar by the donor on his knees. The antiquity of such dedications is evident, from its being an universal custom amongst Jews and Gentiles: and it is observable that amongst the former, at the consecration of both the Tabernacle and the Temple, it pleased the Almighty to give a manifest sign that He then took possession of them." And our Church has been "singularly careful," humanly speaking, when she has consecrated any building to be the House of God, to see that the property is legally secured to her for ever. Few Bishops (and none ought to) will consecrate a building which is encumbered by debt of any kind.

"When the Bishop comes to perform the holy office, he must, as the Rubric directs, 'be received at the entrance of the Church or Chapel by the Churchwardens and Vestrymen, or some other persons appointed for that purpose,' to show their consent to his act. When he has entered within the rails of the chancel, before the sentence of consecration can be read, 'the instruments of donation and endowment, if there be any,' must be presented to him, bequeathing the building, and whatever appertains to it, in trust for the Church, to him and his successors in office for ever, and thus securing to the Church the peaceable possession of the property for all time. When the office of consecration proceeds, we join in the prayer, 'Vouchsafe, O LORD, to be present with

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us, who are here gathered together, in all humility and readiness of heart, to consecrate this place to the honor of Thy great name; separating it henceforth from all unhallowed, ordinary, and common uses, and dedicating it to Thy service, for reading Thy Holy Word, for celebrating Thy Holy Sacraments, for offering to Thy Glorious Majesty the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving, for blessing Thy people in Thy name, and for the performance of all other holy offices.* Then, after the Bishop has blessed the name of the Lord, 'That it hath pleased Him to put it into the hearts of His servants to appropriate and devote the house to His honor and worship,' we beseech Him 'graciously to accept the dedication of the place to His service.*' And then the Bishop is directed to read for the Gospel, as though to rebuke the very spirit of which we have spoken, those indignant words of the Saviour, when He drove out them that bought and sold in the Temple, 'Make not My Father's house an house of merchandize.*' And having made the matter, humanly speaking, sure, we beseech God to 'bless the religious performance of the day, and grant that, in that place, now set apart to His service, His holy name may be worshipped in truth and purity, *through all generations.*.*' And who, that has listened to these holy words, and joined in these pious prayers, can see, on the morrow, after the service, in those now sacred courts, without feeling that it is a spirit of profanation, the auctioneer's hammer, asking, as has been forcibly said, 'of the hungering souls, how much they will give for salvation?' and the same spirit of competition, and bargain, and sale introduced, with which we would buy or sell a house or a horse. Surely, my brethren, that were a strange giver, who will give away to-day that which he intends to sell to-morrow."

Having now spoken of the *principle* of the matter, let us turn to some of the advantages and disadvantages of Free Churches. We have not spoken of these before, because we look upon them as of secondary consideration, when the will of God is involved in the case.

First, there is no other plan but that of the Free Church System, by which our Church edifices can be secured to the Church for ever. If men have a right

* The Form of Consecration of a Church or Chapel, in the Prayer Book.

to any property in the Church of God, they have a right to all. If they can sell six feet of it, they can sell the whole. We were once told of a case where a single person having purchased a majority of the pews in a Church, actually locked out the minister and congregation, and closed the Church, merely because he had taken it into his head to dislike the minister. And whose memory does not tell of cases where rich persons have bought up several of the pews of a Church, in order to obtain so many votes, and so sustain or drive away a popular or unpopular preacher? King's Chapel, Boston, so richly endowed by liberal Churchmen, from the simple fact that in the changes of the Revolutionary War a majority of the pews fell into the hands of those who denied the faith, has become the property of a Socinian society, and its walls resound, from Lord's Day to Lord's Day, with our noble and Scriptural Liturgy, mutilated of all that relates to the doctrine of the Ever Blessed Trinity! And how many a Church building, in every part of our land, once consecrated "to the worship and service of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, according to the provisions of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in its Rites, Doctrines, Liturgy, and usages," has been sold to congregations who hold a corrupt or mutilated faith, or what is worse, applied to secular purposes, and all because men have so far forgotten to whom the building belonged, that they think they can sell it as readily and guiltlessly as they can their farm!

Secondly, the Free Church System is the *only* system by which the poor can be brought to Church.

"The Pew System," writes the Rev. Edward Stuart, "which has introduced so unchristian a distinction in the House of God, between the sittings of the rich and of the poor, and which (there can be little doubt) is doing more to alienate the hearts of tens of thousands, in every large town in England, from the Church of CHRIST, than any other thing that could be named. 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them;' this was one of the signs given by our Lord Himself to John the Baptist, as a proof that the true Messiah had come. 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them!' think of that sentence, and then go round the large Churches of London, and say, 'Are they not filled almost exclusively with the rich?' In some cases, it is all but impossible for a poor man to find a place in the House of CHRIST,—of CHRIST who Himself lived all His life amongst the poor.

"One clergyman, the curate of one of the largest parish Churches at this end of London, told me, that when he urged upon the poor the performance of their religious duties, the answer he got was this:—'Show me a place in Church to go to, and I will go there!' And this is what has been said, and is being said, of the Church of England here in London, while we are professing zeal in God's service! Surely, then, 'unchristian' is not too hard a word to apply to that miserable system, which in the House of God provides first for the convenience and comfort of the rich, and leaves the poor to any sort of place which may remain after the rich are well served; which so exactly fulfils the words of St. James, saying to the rich, 'Sit thou here in a good place;' and to the poor, 'Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool!'"

Well may the Editor of the English *Guardian* remark, that the system of pews "has eaten, and is eating the very life out of the Church;" for we have been eye-witnesses of the truth of the fact stated by the Bishop of North Carolina, in his Primary Charge, that "It is quite observable, that the English country Churches are open to the people, and that the rural population is attached to the Church; while in the cities, where many, though by no means all of the

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Churches, rent their sittings, the population is, to a considerable extent, disaffected with the Church."

We know that it may be, and often is, said, that it is the custom in those Churches where pews are rented to set apart some seats for the poor. But where are they to be found? Who that has entered any of the old Churches, for instance, in the City of New-York, will forget the pew in the corner under the gallery, and next to the door or a red-hot stove, conspicuously marked, "THE STRANGERS' PEW?" And we ask, who, as a stranger in the city, ever entered it, or ever saw another within it? Vestries will argue that Churches must be supported by pew-rents, and, of course, if they are to leave any pews free, it must be those which are the most difficult to rent. And if it were not so, if, for instance, every third or fourth pew throughout the whole Church were left free to all, it would not remedy the difficulty. The poor would not sit in them, much less the indifferent, and those who care little or nothing for religion. There is a natural pride in the human heart, which will not submit to be called mendicant, and to be marked as *the poor* in the House of God. And, remarks the Bishop of North Carolina, most forcibly and justly :

"If it be said, that no man ought to be unwilling to confess his poverty, especially if by this means he can obtain the benefits which the Church dispenses, we must reply, that surely no man ought to be unwilling to do this, and that no perfect man would be, but that the Church is not designed for men who are already what they ought to be, but for those who are not what they ought to be. Our Saviour came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The Gospel is a remedy, the Church is a hospital, so to speak, not for the whole, but for the sick ; and to say that no man shall enter it until he is healed of his false

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pride, and his other spiritual diseases, is to say that the Church is itself a superfluity, and its establishment a blunder. In either point of view, then, by making, selling, and renting pews, the poor are excluded from the Church. But not the poor alone: those also, and their name is Legion, who, from religious indifference, or from parsimony, do not choose to buy or hire places in the House of God. But it may be said, these do not deserve to worship Him. Perhaps not; but who does deserve a place in His Courts? And we must again remember, that 'the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.' If, then, we consider the number under the pew system, who are shut out from the House of God, by their inability to pronounce that 'open sesame,' at which alone under that system its doors revolve, and when we consider the even greater number who prefer, until they are better taught, their money to their souls' culture, it seems remarkable that our Church, encumbered as it has been, to so great an extent, with that as well as with other hindrances, should have made the progress which it actually has made, and is now making. It proves how true, and wise, and Scriptural are her essential principles, when with such a policy she can advance so rapidly. And yet who does not see, that, under the pew system, not our Church alone, but Christianity itself, is losing its hold upon the middle and lower classes of our population? The mechanics in our large cities, and in the manufacturing towns of the North, though generally intelligent and often moral, are not usually a religious body of men. Among them I have reason to believe that infidelity is extending itself more than among any other class. Their Sundays, in many instances, are not sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer, but are spent in seeking recreation and amusement. Their minds, vacant of religious truth, are ready to be filled with Rationalism, Universalism, or any of the other thousand and one forms of error so rife in this land. And I attribute this, not exclusively, but in some measure, to the fact, that in the cities they are shut out from many, not only of our Churches, but of others where they might receive profitable instruction, by their inability from the proceeds of their daily toil, to buy or rent any of the pews so generally found in city Churches."

The fact is, where the Pew System, in whole or in part, prevails, the poor cannot be brought to Church. If we are ever to have an influence over the masses, it must be by throwing open our Churches to all who

will come and take of the water of life *freely*. The case is not too strongly put by the author of "The System of Free Churches," when he asks :

"But how—I ask it in all earnestness, as one who has seen the effects of it—how can the Ministers of God bring such to the knowledge of JESUS, when all the seats in God's house, their Father's house, are monopolized by those who can pay for them? What success would a Missionary in China have in converting the nation, who should go there and erect a Church, and preach in it until the judgment day, to those only who were willing to come and pay for hearing the Gospel preached? And why should it be different here? It is not, and will not be, I am thoroughly convinced, until we throw our Churches open to the poor. Look at the case. The minister enters the poor man's house. He, like the rest of his brethren, does not despise the Gospel. Not a child has he born to him, that he does not bring to be baptized. He would not be married without the Church's sanction; and he always brings his dead to her burial; and yet he is never seen, on any other occasion, within her walls. You ask why it is, and the never varying answer will be, 'I have no pew—I cannot *afford* to go to Church.' What a comment on a system introduced into a Church whose glory should be that to the poor the Gospel is preached, without money and without price! And what can we reply? We have no seats to offer, where pews prevail. Our hands are tied, and our mouths shut, and we can but go sorrowing away."

We might go on to speak at large, did not the length to which our remarks have already extended forbid, of many other important advantages peculiar to Churches where the seats are entirely free. We can only allude now to the fact, that Free Churches are found to accommodate at least one-third more people than those of the same size with pews (no slight advantage in a land where we are so much in need of Church buildings)—to the bitter rivalry, heart-burning and ill-feeling more or less engendered everywhere by the Pew System—the slave which it makes of the

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Church to the world—the ignoring of the obligation of Christians to minister in temporal things to those who dispense to them spiritual things, except as a matter of bargain and sale—and to the good moral influence which it would have on the world to see the Church supported without selfishness—giving her heavenly treasures as *freely* as she has received them—and exhibiting in her gathering of all classes of men into her fold, some realization of the Church's true Catholicity.

We pause but for a moment to answer some of the prominent objections which will be urged against Free Churches. We will be told, that all we have said may be very true and beautiful in *theory*, but it will not do in *reality*. It is not practicable. Men will not go, nor give to Free Churches, and therefore they cannot be supported.

We answer, first, that to say that a Free Church cannot be supported, is to say that God will not support His own institution, or that the commands of CHRIST are impracticable; and secondly, that facts prove the contrary. No Churches are so well filled as those which are free; hence the sum for their maintenance is divided among the greater number. Besides, it unites the poor with the rich in the support of the sanctuary. It costs no more, to say the least, to support a Free Church than one with pews. In a Pew-Church the better classes pay all—the poor giving nothing. But in a Free Church each one, no matter how poor he may be, can give his mite in the weekly offertory, which we look upon as almost inseparable from the system. We ac-

knowledge that there are difficulties in the way. The world at large has no sympathy for the spiritual welfare of the poor and the stranger. Few men give to the support of the Gospel on any fixed principle. They need the stimulus of pew rents, and ostentation, and pride, and notoriety—to have a trumpet sounded before them. But we cannot believe but that, in every community of professing Christians, there are enough of sincere and earnest people, who, when the matter is fairly set before them, and they have seen how the Gospel is shut out from the poor, will give, and that with thankful hearts, all that is required for the support of the Church.

“But ‘If pews are done away with,’ (writes the Rev. Edward Stuart,) it may be said, ‘Pew rents will be lost, and how are the necessary expenses of public worship to be supported then?’ To this it may be answered, that the man who now subscribes ten guineas a year to the support of the Church, and receives in return a pew for his own private use, may give his ten guineas a year just the same, without demanding any such return for it. ‘But will he do so?’ Certainly he will, if he is rightly taught about it. Every one will not do so—some, perhaps, will withdraw altogether from such a system; but it would be a want of trustfulness in the goodness, the manliness, the Christian spirit, the self-denial of others, to suppose that, when they view their annual payment in the light of an offering to support public worship instead of an outlay for their own comfort, and when they see the deep evils of the Pew System, they will not be glad and forward to give up their pew, and, if need be, to double the sum, as a simple offering to God, which has hitherto been paid for their own convenience. A subscription list, attached to each Church, would answer the same end as a list of pew rents; and even if the amount subscribed should at first be rather less, would not the gain of a Free Church, the gain of the hearts of the poor, the gain of the sympathy of every good man, and of the blessing of God, outweigh a thousandfold the loss of a few sovereigns, paid by a selfish heart for a selfish purpose? In whom are we really to trust—in God or in Mammon? If we really are, in full sincerity,

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aiming at the kingdom of God, will not all these things be added unto us? Which generally succeeds in the end—high and true principle, or worldly craft? Has the Church, within the last twenty years, had less actual money offered for its services, because it has repudiated the system of charity-balls, and charity-dinners, and charity-bazaars, fruitful as they were in their day?—or has not its store been multiplied just in proportion as it has appealed to higher and truer principles, to self-devotion and self-denial? Let us grant that throwing overboard the system of pew rents is something of a venture; but is it not one of those ventures of faith, which look like folly to the worldly-wise, but which, if made in unfeigned sincerity of purpose, bring God's blessing on them, as it was of old on the barrel of meal, and on the cruse of oil?"

- And such, we may add, has been the result, whenever and wherever the plan has been faithfully tried. The Church of God existed without the pew system, both under the Law and the Gospel, for three thousand years; and when have the Church and the clergy ever been as well supported? St. Chrysostom and St. Austin, both thought that the system of voluntary offerings, when practised, made a better provision for the clergy than even the lands and possessions of the Church. Who built the noble cathedrals of our Mother Church, which their descendants, who traffic in pews, are scarcely able to keep in ordinary repair,* but men who would have scorned to have made merchandise of the House of God? And then see how the Free Churches in this country, in spite of all hindrances, have succeeded. We quote from a long list, almost at random. The Church of the Holy Communion, New York, seating but 500 persons, defrays all the expenses of public worship, with two priests, and a Daily Ser-

* York Minster, one of the most perfect Cathedral buildings in England, requires for the ordinary repairs and sustentation of the fabric, \$5,000 per annum. And it

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vice, and contributes more than any congregation of its size to the general purposes of the Church. St. Paul's, Key West, Florida, seating but 250 persons, where the pews, if rented, would realize \$800, receives from its offertory and subscriptions \$1,150 per annum. Holy Innocents', Albany, New-York, seating 250 persons, where the pews, if rented, would realize \$800, receives from its offerings \$1,200 to \$1,300 per annum. Christ Church, Elizabeth, New Jersey, seating 300 persons, where the pews if rented would realize about \$500 or \$600, received last year from offerings and subscriptions, for parish expenses, \$1,066, besides \$600 appropriated to the poor and general objects of the Church. Grace Church, Petersburg, Va., seating 350 persons, realizes from subscriptions and offerings, \$1,100 per annum. Christ Church, Vicksburg, Miss., seating 500 persons, which had great difficulty in paying its expenses under the *Pew System*, last year, the fifth since they adopted the *Free System*, received, through the offerings and subscriptions for various objects, about \$3,000, over and above the Rector's salary, which is equal to \$2,000. St. Stephen's Church, Oxford, North Carolina, seating 150 persons, receives from subscriptions, \$1,500 per annum. St. John's Church, Knoxville, Tenn., seating 250, receives

is estimated that to put every part in complete repair would cost \$250,000, though \$740,000 have been expended on the building during the last fourteen years. The Cathedral at Canterbury has had, during the same period, \$10,000 per annum spent upon it. Durham Cathedral, reported to be "in very good, substantial repair," has cost over \$5,000 per annum for repairs. And St. Paul's, London, though so recently erected, has a fund of \$7,500 per annum for repairs. What must have been the original cost of buildings, to repair whose mere annual decay requires more than we often think we can afford to expend for the building of a Church?—*Christian Remembrancer*, Vol. xxix. p. 347.

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from offerings and subscriptions \$1,200 per annum. We are willing to place these examples, taken from every portion of the country, by the side of the like number of Churches of the same size which have the Pew System, without the least fear that the Free Churches will, in any way, suffer by the comparison.

But then we shall be told that families cannot sit together—we shall be so discommoded—and a Free Church will be a scene of confusion every Sunday morning. We reply, have Christians no courtesy? And will a Church be less the place for politeness than a railroad car or a steamboat? Was this objection ever heard in a concert-room? Did men ever stay away from any public exhibition because they could not have their own *pew*? The objection could never have been made by any one who has attended a Free Church. In our own experience, with a congregation frequently too large for the Church, and among people who until within a few years had been always accustomed to pews of their own, we can only say we have never heard the objection made. No family that is in time for the beginning of the Service need be separated. And close observation has proved that the ordinary congregation of a Free Church usually sit in the same seats. On extraordinary occasions they would not do so under any system.

And now, before we close this article, one word as to what we may all do for the advancement of Free Churches, in which the Gospel may once more be preached to the poor. We have spoken plainly and freely upon the matter, because we are convinced if

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men would only speak out boldly what they believe, there would be far less rankling differences and—none the less corroding because secret—alienation among brethren of the same household. We look upon the whole Pew System not only as one of the greatest hindrances to the successful working of Christianity, but one of the greatest curses that has fallen on the Church in modern times. And we do not believe that it could ever have been grafted upon the Church, except in such an age as that of Cromwell, when worldly-mindedness and individual selfishness had darkened and almost hid all spiritual religion; and that if the claim had been made for the first time in our own day, not only common sense, but every feeling of religion and equity would be roused against it. Nothing but the iron rule of prevalent custom, and the prejudice of English traditions, could hide from the eyes of men the injustice of the plan. And hence we would do all that lies in our power to tear it root and branch from the Church. Not that we believe the odious system will ever be carried so far in this country as it has in England, though they are only its legitimate fruits. We have ourselves seen pews in English Churches twelve feet or more square, duly enclosed by curtains and tapestry, furnished with drawing-room chairs, centre table, hat stand, and stove with fender and fire irons!! Not that we believe that the whole system of pews can or will be instantly done away. It is a system with which the world has bound the Church, and which many good and holy men have adopted in all sincerity of purpose; and it is not for us to say when or how a

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congregation can cast off its cords. Still, we confess to an earnest desire to see our own American branch of the Church Catholic, with its temples as free to the wayfaring man and the stranger as the Jewish Temple, the Greek and Roman Churches, the Mosques of the false prophet, and the idol Temples of the pagan; and we acknowledge that we have never entered a Romish Church on the Continent, and seen how the whole space is left open every day as a place of retirement and prayer for *all classes*, and watched the little children as they came in, in pairs or singly, go down on their knees and hold up their little hands in prayer before the altar, or seen the steps of the Churches at early morn covered with the tools of the laborers who, on their way to their daily task, had stopped to ask God's blessing on the day, or as twilight drew its curtain round, the rich and poor side by side on the same stone floor, without breathing the prayer that we might yet behold something of this in our own land and temples of a purer faith.

There is a spirit abroad in the world which is deepening the inequalities of society, and widening the distance between the rich and the poor. The spirit of modern civilization tends to separate the various classes of society. The tendency of our country is to the concentration of power in the hands of a few office-holders, or secret leagues, which care not a straw but for the men of their own party. The Church, as the only real conservative body in the country, is to set herself against all this, and do what she can in her own sphere to provide that men, in her fold at least, shall

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meet on the equality of brothers and members of the same family. To make the seats in our Churches free, or to build those with free seats, where the rich and the poor may meet together before Him who is the Maker of them all, is to set forward this work. The Clergy and the Laity of the Church must unite in the effort. If they cannot procure the adoption of the Free System in their own parishes, they can at least accomplish one step towards it by seeing that the pews are rented from year to year, (privately, and not by auction,) instead of sold ; and perhaps in many instances, what is far better, allow no rents to be collected for the pews, but let all who desire seats in the Church, annually put down their names on paper, at Easter or some other fixed time, with the amount they will subscribe to the support of the Church, and then let the Wardens, with or without the Vestry, assign them seats for the ensuing year, by lot or otherwise. This would be the next best thing to a Free Church, and would quiet the objections of those who think they cannot worship God unless they have *their own pew*. More Churches might be built in almost every large town in the land ; and let them in every case be *free*. Do not build them as experiments, or leave them to start burthened with debt, or what is worse, resort to fairs and bazaars to raise money for them. Do not look upon their support as alms, nor call them Churches for the poor. Let all classes be induced to attend ; and pay for them through the Offertory as you would pay for the propagation of the Gospel, or the support of Missions. Let diocesan efforts be made in their

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behalf; bring to bear upon them the influence of the various Conventions; and above all, set about the establishment of diocesan funds for the support of the Gospel in Free Churches.

Let the Clergy stand forth and boldly say, "We will no longer be the mere chaplains of a class, or the hirelings of a society, the mere well-bred guests at the table of the worldling, and the almoner of his bounty, the indulger of his convenience, forgetful of the thousands of poor in our midst; but the pastors and ministers of the whole people among whom we live." Let them impress upon their flocks the duty of self-sacrifice, and inculcate the more unworldly and liberal spirit of the Gospel. Let them teach men that they must give for the propagation of the Gospel more than their mere superfluities, or what they will not miss; but to diminish their expenses and delay their hopes of wealth, that they may be able to give; and to adopt a plan of systematic charity, and that from a sense of duty, laying by them in store as the Lord hath prospered them.

Let the Laity come forward to the work and dare something in CHRIST's name, for the cause of His poor. Let them uphold the hands of their pastors, and do and strive in every lawful way, whether alone or united with others, to drive out all "merchandise" from the temples of God. They must, perhaps, bear the ridicule of the world; they may have to run the risk of failure; they will have to overcome the hindrances that proud, selfish, and worldly men will put in their way; but let them give themselves in charity and

prudence and good earnest to the work, and, our word for it, they will have not only the blessing of God upon their labors, but a deep tide of sympathy from all good men, which will encourage their hearts, as it enables them to overcome all hindrances; and they will have the earnest prayer of many a heart, now cast down with that fearful forgetfulness of the outcast and the poor which now so largely pervades the Church, "The Lord prosper you; we wish you good luck in the name of the Lord." Our word for it that the energies of the multitudes which are now filling the hosts of dissent, and sustaining, after their own imperfect way, "Sabbath Schools" and "City Missions," and benevolent associations for the relief of the poor, one and all doing CHRIST's work without His means, and so wasted through division and disunion, would be found swelling the ranks of the Church, and by their united efforts enable her, under God, to possess the land. Surely, such a work must unite all classes and all parties of men. "Surely, so widely spread a blessing as the throwing open our Churches freely and entirely to all classes, 'without money and without price'—a work which would move men's secret consciences more than a thousand sermons, which would take the sting out of sectarianism and socialism, and draw together the different ranks of society, so mistrustful of each other now—surely this is a work to unite and combine together for:—'*vis unita fortior.*'" May God prosper it for the sake of His poor, who are always to be with us, and to whom He would have His Gospel preached.

ART. II.—THE ADVANTAGES OF OPEN SEATS.

BY THE RIGHT REV. J. MEDLEY, D. D.,

Bishop of Fredericton.

THE subject of Open Seats has been already so fully discussed, and treated with so much learning and ability by various writers, that it may appear almost superfluous to attempt anything more on the same head. Yet, when we consider how very difficult it is to remove long-established evils, and how hard it is to induce men to forego what they identify with their own just vested rights, and regard, however erroneously, as part and parcel of the system of the Church to which they belong, I may be excused for hazarding a few observations on the question; and I am the more inclined to do so, from perceiving that respectable writers, partly from fear of change, and partly, it may be presumed, from misunderstanding the question, have come forward to advocate the retention of the pew system.

We propose, then, now to consider the close pew system, as it has pressed upon the English Church for the last hundred and fifty or two hundred years, and to *show that it is alike inconvenient and unchristian, and that the arguments in its favor, and the objections raised against the system of open seats, properly understood, are fallacious and untenable.*

In every discussion, a great deal of labor is saved

by the definition of the leading terms in dispute. And, on this account, it may be right to state what is here meant by the *pew system, as practised for the last two hundred years*. It is obvious, then, to every one acquainted with the history of pews that a great change for the worse; some indications of which had been seen even before the Reformation, was consummated during the Great Rebellion.

Previous to that national crime, the great principle of English Common and Ecclesiastical law, that seats in a Church are the common property of all the inhabitants of the parish, was in the great majority of instances fully acted upon. The Church was for the benefit of the many, not of the few; it was the common home, the common property of all; courtesy or custom might assign a place nearer the chancel to an individual of exalted rank, but the principle of spiritual equality was generally preserved. There was no visible exclusion, no assumption of worldly superiority, no violent thrusting out of the poor into inferior places, still less banishing of them altogether. *There was a tie of brotherhood within our FATHER'S house.*

But at and after the Rebellion a great change took place. In the remote country districts of England, traditional association, or poverty, or some particular good influences, or équally happy ignorance, preserved in their integrity the ancient seats; the parishioners knew little of the principles of architecture, but some few admired the carving, most felt their comfort, and all knew that they required very little repair; the stubborn oak held on in spite of time and innova-

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tion. The more ambitious towns-folk would all be little squires, and have close pews. They must be square to make them family conservatories, and high to insure privacy of devotion. The poor are gradually thrust out, one by one. The habit of appropriation becomes general, faculties are multiplied, and last of all, to complete the "abomination of desolation" in the sanctuary of God, comes the sale of pews for money to the highest bidder, which, though now denounced by the highest legal authorities, was (till very lately) an everyday occurrence. Thus we see, first, the great fundamental principles of English law, civil and ecclesiastical, are violated; secondly, the poor are proscribed, and poverty is made a disgrace, and the rich termed the "*respectable*" people; thirdly, what may be termed simoniacal contracts are openly made, and the exchangers of money are found sitting in the temple of God, not, as of old, for the accommodation of those who enter in, but for the baser purpose of letting a few in, and of turning the many out. And here it must be fairly acknowledged, that although the sin is more or less a national sin, much blame must rest with the clergy, who might have arrested the progress of the evil by a timely appeal to the rightful authorities. Unhappily many of them were foremost in the work of demolition, and the state of the chancels until lately, in most Churches, shows how very little they could have been aware of the sacred duties incumbent on the *guardian* of the house of God.

Having thus explained what is meant by the Pew System, and shown some of the evils invariably, in a

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greater or less degree, attendant upon it, I may endeavor to explain what is intended by the system of open benches. I mean such an arrangement as is consistent with the fundamental principle of the law, that "the seats in every Church are for the use of all the inhabitants of the parish;" and which, by having the seats all low, of equal height, with ample space for kneeling, and without doors, embodies that legal principle in a visible form, prevents the notion of exclusion, and suggests to all who enter the house of God, that this is a place of common weal, and common prayer, and public property, built for the use of man, and for the glory of Almighty God. It is not inconsistent with the system of open benches that particular persons, or families, should regularly occupy the same seats, but that they should occupy them to the exclusion of others, if there be room; and no doubt seats might be assigned by the Churchwardens; but were the custom for which we plead universal, I do not imagine there would be a necessity for such assignment. Courtesy and regularity would assign seats which would not be disturbed. *Only, there would be no exclusion.* And in Churches where all the seats still remain open, this is found uniformly to be the case.

From this we may pass to the *extreme inconvenience of pews*, in regard to the purposes of devotion. For lounging, talking, or slumbering, pews are convenient enough, but for no other purpose. In the large square pews, it is, of course, impossible for those who sit facing each other to kneel. One or two in the corners

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of the seat may do so, but no more. And even in long pews, most persons find that their height renders kneeling so painful that it is impossible to continue it; and in the new Churches, where the pews are lower and more uniform, they are generally so narrow that one can only just sit in them; kneeling is absolutely out of the question. So that, generally speaking, *more than two-thirds of every congregation sit down during the whole time of prayer*, though the invitatory psalm expressly says, “O come, let us worship and fall down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” This fact alone is enough to make every sincere worshiper wish to be rid of pews, inasmuch as those who do not stand during the service are almost compelled to sit down, contrary to the practice of David, of Solomon, of Ezra, of Daniel, of St. Paul, and of our blessed LORD Himself; contrary, indeed, to the dictates even of natural piety. Who would not wish that what fosters so bad a custom, and so offensive to Almighty God, should be speedily abolished?

I have not dwelt at length on the loss of room occasioned by pews, as this subject has been so ably handled by the Cambridge Camden Society. The fact is sufficient, that where three hundred sit in large square pews, four hundred can be accommodated in open benches, which are both cooler and really more comfortable. But it is right to notice also another fact. It is quite clear that, taking an average of families, including tradesmen and domestic servants, not more than half of each family, in many parishes not more than one-third, attend Church *at any one service*, and while

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the chief part of the sittings are appropriated to families who do not fully occupy them, the Churches are necessarily less filled than they would be under a different system, and multitudes of the poor are thrust out altogether. And it has been often observed, that no parish Churches are so well and so regularly attended, as those which possess the greatest number of open seats, because, there being no exclusive appropriation, a sufficient number can attend at every service.

Unable, then, to defend their system on these grounds, the advocates of pews are sometimes wont to retire behind the authority of *law*, and allege that whatever else may be said against the Pew System, it is at all events legal; that the law protects men in their rights to pews, allots particular seats to particular persons, and forbids that indiscriminate confusion which must arise where all the seats are open.

But if the question of law be fairly examined, it will be found that the very reverse of this is the case, as may be seen by comparing what have been the common notions on the subject of legal rights in pews with the actual sentences of the Common and Ecclesiastical Law of England, and the decisions of its judges. Far be it from any one whose leading principle is law, and order, and harmony, to advocate indiscriminate confusion. We wish to prevent confusion, but not by closed doors and exclusive pews. We know that in Churches where all the seats are open, no confusion arises; but the habit of coming regularly and in good time to Church, secures every man his seat without injury to his neighbor. This has been called, strangely enough,

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“a pious fraud,” “without additional advantage,” “or if an universal sense of propriety should keep all things quiet, and each one instinctively in his place,” “it is the same pew-principle notwithstanding,” the good behaviour being “problematical and contingent, whereas, under the Pew System, there is regularity, and quietness, and *satisfaction!*” What “pious fraud” there can be in each man’s “sense of propriety” leading him to “keep his own place,” without shutting out his neighbor by a door, it is difficult to imagine. The advantage is neither “problematical” nor “contingent.” You ensure attendance in time, and you prevent small families occupying large spaces, to the exclusion of their neighbors. The notion that the Pew System produces “regularity, quietness, and satisfaction,” is truly ridiculous; it being notorious to any one who knows anything of its working, that it leads people to be most irregular in their attendance, because their seats are sure to be kept for them, and that it is the cause of continual quarrels all the year round, to say nothing of occasional lawsuits.

Such is the effect of our Pew System, which not only opposes itself to the Gospel, but has led to heart-burnings and jealousies innumerable. This is the corrupt and wicked system, which is described by the writer before alluded to, as producing “regularity, quietness, and satisfaction!” *Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.* For it is notorious that the great stieklers for their vested rights, as pew-owners, are the most irregular attendants at Church, and that many of them seldom enter it; mighty supporters of the

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outer frame-work, but caring nothing for that which is "all glorious within;" ready to spend their last shilling in defence of an illegal purchase, but indifferent to the welfare of hundreds of the poor, who have none to speak for them, or appeal in behalf of their invaded rights.

It has pleased God, in His wisdom, not only to permit, but to sanction, that system of just subordination which we find established in the world. All men are not born into the world equal. Not only their stations, but their capacities and powers, are unequal and various, even from their mother's womb. Yet, because both revelation and the experience of mankind lend their sanction to the upholding of worldly distinctions, and to a just subordination of ranks and degrees, for the better ordering of the temporal affairs of this mortal life, we must not at once conclude that the spiritual system which Christianity introduced into the world, is precisely of the same kind. Order there is in Christianity, but it is spiritual order; subordination there must be, but under a different arrangement; harmony must be preserved, but by a different constitution of society. That constitution is in Scripture termed the Church; in which we are taught that "rich and poor meet together" on some principle of equality; that "God is no respecter of persons;" that all ranks and degrees of men have a common Saviour, a universal redemption, a common salvation proposed to all on the same terms, according to one rule, under one Head, without distinction or preference, with one reward, distributed in various degrees, not according to tempo-

ral distinction, but in proportion to the improvement of talents, and increase in grace, in every station of worldly society.

Further, the order and subordination maintained in the spiritual society, is of a spiritual kind. It is in consonance with every form of temporal government, but is not dependent on any ; it sanctions and upholds all worldly distinctions, but refuses to be fettered by them ; it inculcates the duty of subordination, but maintains a principle of equality ; it raises the poor, and depresses the rich ; it “ takes the needy from the dunghill, and sets them among princes, that they may inherit a throne of glory ;” and bids the rich rejoice in that he is made low, because, as the flower of the field, he and his riches, and his temporal glory, shall “ pass away,” and only that shall remain which is the joint possession both of rich and poor.

This view, then, of CHRIST’s spiritual kingdom, which is found in the New Testament, is a sufficient answer to all who object that the principle of open seats is a principle of confusion ; that it introduces a levelling, democratic system into our Churches ; and that “ God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.” To such we reply, the principle of spiritual equality between rich and poor, is the very principle of Christianity itself, and to act upon such a principle is the duty of every Christian ; and to neglect and violate such principle is to subvert the fundamental laws of Christianity itself. Christianity acknowledges an aristocracy, but not in pews : respects the privileges of birth, but not in public worship : there men come to

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abase, not to glorify and exalt themselves ; to acknowledge their own unworthiness, to be the least and lowest of God's children ; not to say, " I am better than thou," or " Sit here under my footstool." How offensive, then, must it be in His sight, who " chargeth His angels with folly," when the poor, whom CHRIST counted happy, are not only not respected, but dishonored and contemned : not only dishonored, but thrust out, and spurned away ; while the rich enlarge their ample seats, and make broad their spacious resting-places, not to admit their fellow-Christians, but pertinaciously to exclude them, not recollecting that the gate which they make strait for others is thereby made straiter and narrower for themselves. How unacceptable must be that worship, in the eyes of the Great Father of all, which borrows the cloak of humility to cover its own disdainful pride ; which is not ashamed to imitate the actions of the Pharisee, while it makes use, throughout the service, of the language of the Publican ; and which justifies the neglect of the common calls of charity, by the pretence of the necessity of order, and the duty of maintaining worldly subordination. When were the Christian poor ever found to trample on the robes of the wealthy, and thrust aside the claims of their superiors ? Where do they disorderly intrude in public worship, and in time of Holy Communion rush to the table in unseemly crowds, forcing the rich to the last and lowest place ? Who ever saw them immodest and indecently clamorous, when the bread of life is dispensed, and the medicine of the world is waited for ? Then you can

scarce induce any of them to come before others ; they wait in humility, and “ take the lowest room,” though they who honor the poor would fain bid them “ come up higher.” Shame on the base suspicion that cannot trust them to be decent, who are modestly respectful ; that will not believe that they can honor those who honor them, when they even now honor those by whom they are dishonored !

But this evil custom the Scripture has plainly condemned, in the words of St. James :—“ My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly (συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν) a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man, in vile raiment ; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place ; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool ; are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts ?”*

To evade the force of this remarkable text, some have asserted that the “ assembly” here spoken of is a judicial court, which, if it were true, would not hinder us from applying its spirit to assemblies for Christian worship. But the language of the Apostle, as well as the whole context, clearly shows that Christian assemblies for public worship are intended. For, 1, St. James had just been speaking of “ pure and undefiled worship” (θρησκεία), which would naturally suggest some directions as to the manner of performing

* St. James, ii. 1-4.

public worship. 2. The word for "assembly" is *συναγωγή*, "synagogue;" a word never used in the Scripture but for places of worship. (Witsius de Synagog. Suicer. in voce. Reland, p. 127.) 3. Certain small judicial courts of the Jews were held in the synagogue itself; but the Apostle is not writing to Jews, but to Jewish Christians, who might, and probably did, use old synagogues as places of Christian worship, but who would not have been permitted by the authorities to use them as law-courts. He therefore says, *συναγωγή ὑμῶν*, "*your synagogue*;" which distinctly marks it as a place of worship for *Christians*. 4. We meet with the word (with the addition of the preposition) used by St. Paul for a place of public worship, Heb. x. 25: *Τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ὑμῶν*, "*your assembling together*;" whereas both St. Paul and St. James use a different word, *κριτηρία*, for the law-courts: St. James, ii. 6; 1 Cor. vi. 2. The word is also used twice by St. Ignatius for places of public worship: Ep. ad Trall. 3, *συναγωγή οσίων*; Ep. ad Polycarp. iv., *πυκνότερον συναγωγὰν γινέσθωσαν* :* which marks its use in the earliest times in countries where Jewish Christians abounded, and connects it with the expression of St. James.† So that we cannot hope to evade the plain condemnation of the evils of the Pew System, exclusion and partiality, by an inspired writer.

It is as if the Apostle had been a living witness to the customs too prevalent in our Churches; as if its

* Coteler. Patres Apostol

† "Nondum enim Fideles nomen *συνάγωγης* adhibebant, ut se a Judæis distinguerent."—*Jacobson in loc.*

Judge had stood behind the door, and had heard them saying, "This is MY SEAT;" "go sit there under my footstool, or stand in the aisle, MY SEAT is too good for such as you." "BUT YE HAVE DESPISED THE POOR."

In short, to bring this paper to a conclusion, I believe there is no real argument against open seats but this, that there will be confusion in the Churches; or, as one writer has pathetically described it, "rushings, commotion, and discomfort, and sometimes great personal danger!!" so that you may seldom be twice a year in the same place," &c.

These imaginary discomforts would, however, soon be seen to be without any foundation. First, take the case of the rural, *i. e.*, of the great majority of the parishes. It is notorious that where the open benches are retained, no confusion whatever exists; and that the least degree of good nature on the part of the communicants would entirely prevent it, where open benches were substituted for pews. Nay, it is equally evident that, by common consent, and without appropriation, each person takes his own seat every Sunday, yet there is no exclusion. And, to prevent any difficulty arising from the mixture of different classes, the old custom of men and women sitting in different parts of the Church, which still prevails in so many rural districts, may be, with great ease and excellent effect, adopted. Nor need this custom at all interfere with parents taking charge of their own children. And if all the seats face the east, there can be no interference of different parties with each other.

In town parishes of large size, there might be some

difficulty, owing to the inveteracy of former abuses. Yet even there an arrangement, similar to that in use at Southmolton, might be adopted. The poor occupy the centre of the Church, having the best places in it ; the rich sit under the galleries ; the tradesmen and others in the galleries themselves. And though this is not the best arrangement that may be thought of, still it is far better than obtains in many cases ; and it is hoped that an increasing desire is felt to allot proper places for those who are the most numerous body of our fellow-Christians. Some few there may be, after all, who will conceive themselves aggrieved by what they regard as a discomfort, and an inroad on their old habits. Man, indeed, it must be confessed, is a microscopic animal, liable to be acted upon by very small motives, and to be vexed by very tiny annoyances. Some one has said, with much show of probability, that a scratch in the little finger, or a gnat-bite in the great toe, would cause a man more real vexation than his hearing that all the inhabitants of the empire of China were drowned. And so, doubtless, it may be with these infinitesimal calculators of comfort. Still they may derive some consolation from thinking that open seats may be made very comfortable ; that it may be as pleasant to sleep soundly in one's bed on Sunday night, as to slumber in Church over the afternoon sermon ; and that, probably, not a grain of comfort will be abstracted, where everybody is seated, and yet nobody excluded.

ART. III.—THE PEW SYSTEM

THE CHIEF HINDRANCE TO THE CHURCH'S WORK IN TOWNS.

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ONE great evil which has followed upon the Pew System, is the tendency which has existed to look upon the Church and the Church Services as a stiff, unwieldy relic of past ages, which it is not decent openly to oppose, but which it is a point, no less of wisdom than of necessity, to pass by, in all real, energetic work amongst the people. As a proof of this, we know that school-room lectures, of a plain, familiar kind, on week-day evenings—cottage prayer-meetings, to which men may come in their working dress, and feel at home and at their ease at them—these, and modes of work such as these, have been the favorite schemes of clergymen who have desired to minister to the poor. And such kind of irregular ministrations bear witness to two things,—first, to the need of some religious ministrations of a more homely and simple character, with more of warmth and life in them than we have been accustomed to associate with our well-dressed Sunday congregations, and coldly performed Sunday services; and secondly, to the supposed impossibility of supplying this want in and by the Church itself. “We like

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our Wednesday evening school-room lecture," many would say, "because the clergyman speaks so plainly to us then; he seems then to tell us what he really thinks and feels, and there is so much more ease there than in Church; no need to change our clothes, and our whole demeanor, as though it were Sunday; no need there to sit at the opposite end of the building from the minister, and strain our attention to catch a word here and a word there by chance. We can really feel and join in what we do there, and go home cheered by the prayers and hymns, instead of being chilled and wearied by something we cannot enter into, and can scarcely hear." Most true and excellent all this, but why not have it in the Church? The real answer I suspect will be, "Because the Church is so stiff, and cold, and dreary, and formal; it is filled from one end to the other with great pews, which are the private property of different people, and we can't and we don't feel at home there."

Now, surely, if something of this kind is generally acknowledged to be true, what we should do is, to restore the Church itself to such a condition as may give it that home feeling so much desired, and which it, of all other places, ought to have:—sweep out every pew from the Church; let the altar be elevated and honored as the centre of worship; the choir be placed (where it would naturally place itself) in front of the altar; and the whole of the rest of the Church be one paved area, with movable forms,—or still better with chairs,—set about here and there, just where they are really wanted; then have a few candles

lighted for the evening prayer, and the small congregation gathered together in front of the altar, or round the pulpit, and the Church open for those who please to come in and kneel down and say their own prayers, if they have not time to wait and join in the evening service ; and who would think then of going to a school-room or private house, when, in addition to the homeliness and ease thus given, the natural associations of the house of God are added, to elevate and subdue, and inspire feelings of reverence and devotion ?

Of course, anything of this kind is utterly impossible while private pews stand in the way. The first requisite for such uses of our Churches is, that they should be entirely free, without a single private seat in them. And it is really a matter of importance that we should graft on this homely every-day religion to the Church, and not look upon it as the instrument of our fuller, and, of necessity, more formal Sunday services only ; for if, when you wish to be more practical and real, more plain and familiar in teaching—if you then pass by the Church, and gather a congregation in a school or private room, what else do you do but teach direct scepticism towards the Church and the Church's services, the fruits of which those who come after you, if not you yourself, will one day reap ? For it is said, of course, “ Ah ! we can't have this in Church ; in Church, everything must be formal, and stiff, and cold ; and ministrations which have anything of life, or kindness, or homely simplicity in them, must be looked for somewhere else.” What is likely to be the result of this ? Of course, it is a

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much easier thing to acquiesce in existing evils than to try and remove them, much easier to acquiesce in the Pew System, and use the school-room for all familiar ministrations, than to grapple with the difficulty of bringing the Church itself into a real and practicable condition; but, rely upon it, those who do take this line are cherishing a secret mistrust of the Church, which will eat out the very heart's core of its life.

2. The chief evil, however, of the Pew System is, perhaps, that it has introduced so offensive and unchristian a distinction, especially in towns, between the seats of the rich and of the poor—between the pews themselves and the free sittings, which are the provision thought fit for all who cannot afford to hire a pew. And this is a most serious matter; for, side by side with the wretched class of poverty-stigmatized sittings, which is all that is offered to the artisan and laborer in our towns, we have the painful, and, to a thoughtful mind, the very startling fact that such persons have, as a body, ceased to attend the services of the Church altogether. Is there no connection between the two? Granting, most fully, that really earnest and religious-minded men would be found in God's house under much greater discouragements than this; yet, have we any right to expect that men will become earnest and religious, if they meet in the world with every temptation to irreligion, and in the Church itself with something too like cold discouragement? How often, when the clergyman speaks to such persons of going to Church as a duty to God, the remembrance

of the Church itself, with its miserable “free sittings,” and its well-dressed gentry, lounging in a patronising manner over their pew ends, on each side—how often would he find that this was the real hindrance to his efforts. Not that there was any active irreligion, any professed infidelity, or any love of the unhappy life of those who are without God in the world ; but that there was a strong instinctive shuddering at the kind of treatment which they know they shall meet with in Church. It is this that we want—to feel and think for others ; not patronize, and dogmatize, and lecture, but to consider with ourselves what is the real obstacle in the way of men serving God—what we ourselves should feel to be a hindrance if we were in their situation—and then to labor earnestly for its removal. If we have not something of this spirit in us, we have not the first requisite of the ministers of CHRIST ; if we stand upon our rights, and say coldly that there *must* be different ranks in the world, and that it is the duty of those who are in the lower ranks to acquiesce in and submit to that which is God’s appointment, without remembering that it is the special office of the Church to think and to feel for those on whom the world’s customs press most heavily, to lighten their lot, and soften down the roughness of their passage to our common home—if we are not willing to imitate Him Who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister ; not to stand upon His own rights, and claim the honor due from us to Him, but Who was always forward Himself to suffer with and for men, and to teach pa-

tience and humility by example even more than by precept,—I say, if we lose this spirit of Christian sympathy, and voluntarily bearing the hardships of other men's lot, we lose the very spirit of our Gospel, and deserve to become (what the world would make us) a hireling ministry, a moral police, a heartless, and therefore lifeless and useless engine for maintaining order in the State. I do not mean to sympathize with that shallow spirit of lawlessness which would confuse all distinctions of rank, and proclaim an universal equality amongst men; differences of rank are God's appointment in this world, and we are taught that there will be differences of rank in the next world too. All men are not equal in bodily health or strength, or in mind or in disposition. "One star differeth from another star in glory;" and one of the first lessons the Church has to teach is this—"Whatever your lot may be in this world, it is God's appointment; and if you murmur against it, you murmur against Him. Bear it in faith and patience, and it will work for your honor and happiness; resist it, and it will break you in pieces." One of our first lessons to those in the lower ranks of the world is, to bear their lot with patience as from God, and to accept the hardships of it as their appointed share in the Cross of CHRIST; but, *O! how can we preach the Cross to others, if we shrink from it ourselves?* With what heart can we force upon other men's necks the cross which we fling off from our own shoulders? With what face can we point out the stigmatised "free sittings" to others, from the selfish dignity and

comfort of our own private pew? I do indeed believe that this strongly marked division in our Churches—a division not founded on any intelligible religious principle, such as between communicants and non-communicants, or between baptized and unbaptized, or between men and women, which would be reasonable and right; but simply on the possession or non-possession of money enough to hire a pew—I do believe that this is felt as a most unchristian distinction by the working classes of this country, acquiesced in, of course, by the good, from Christian principle; by the bad, because their own manifestly irreligious lives hinder them from being listened to if they spoke on such matters. But still, though borne in silence, it is, I cannot but think, alienating from the Church and from CHRIST, thousands and tens of thousands all round us, who never tell us the true reason of their neglect of public worship, but whom a little real and sincere sympathy would draw, first to Church, then to prayer, then to the Sacrament, and so on, through God's kingdom on earth, to their place in God's kingdom in heaven.

3. It may, perhaps, be said, that the evils here spoken of are met by making all the seats in a Church of a uniform character; appropriating some of them, and leaving others free to the first comer. This, however, is a change rather in appearance than in reality; for, however far superior this may be in appearance to the old plan, it is, in point of principle, precisely the same. The real objection is to any congregational arrangements which is based solely on the possession or non-

possession of money ; a division between baptized and unbaptized, or between communicants and non-communicants, would be intelligible and appropriate ; there is the well-known division of penitents of old into the prostrate, the mourners, the hearers, &c. ; probably, the most practical and useful division, in our day, would be simply that of separating men and women, following the distinction drawn by the hand of God ; but any division which is grounded simply upon the possession of money, must be out of place in a Christian Church, and will be found, almost inevitably, to foster a petty spirit of pride in those who receive, and a spirit of jealous discontent in those who are deprived of its benefits.

A Church, in which all the sittings are uniform in character, is, of course, a great advance upon those in which the distinction between pews and free seats is so broadly drawn as in ordinary town Churches ; and in many cases it may be all that can at present be done ; and it may be a step, too, as such Churches seem likely to be, to the entire abolition of the Pew System. But do not let us mistake the appearance for the reality ; it is the appropriation of sittings, not merely their shape and fashion,—a matter of principle, not merely a matter of taste,—that is here spoken of. To get low-backed pews instead of high-backed pews, pews without doors instead of pews with doors, Gothic pews instead of Grecian pews, may be, and is, as a matter of taste and orderly appearance, a great gain ; but do not let us suppose that this is getting rid of the pews themselves ; it may be a step towards this, but it is far

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short of what is needed ; it may be accepted as the most that can be done under existing prejudices, and as a movement in the right direction, but to take up with this, and suppose that we have so got rid of the Pew System, would indeed be to mistake the shadow for the substance. There is a freedom, an ease, a largeness of principle, and trustfulness of feeling, in Churches entirely unappropriated, which goes home to the minds of most men ; but where the appropriation of any sittings remains, there still exists the fear on going into Church, lest you should be taking a sitting to which you have no right, and from which you may be turned out ; you have to wait, and ask the pew-opener where you may go ; you feel that there is a hindrance in your way,—that you cannot walk into Church, and take the first unoccupied seat, as a matter of course ; and while this hindrance remains, it is, I fear, useless to expect that those who most need religious instruction will come near our Churches. Let any one go into a town where he is unknown, and have the choice of two Churches to go to, one partly appropriated, and the other entirely free, and let him say which of them seems most to invite him into it : into which of them does he feel that he can walk most freely, and take his place at once, with most confidence ?

4. It is not meant, however, to have no principle of order in our Churches ; and it will probably be found necessary, especially in towns, on throwing open Churches freely and entirely to the people, to restore the old custom, which in many parts of England has never

been laid aside, of separating the sexes during worship,—assigning one side of the Church to the men, the other to the women. This is a question, in some measure, distinct from the other, since a Church may, of course, be entirely free without any such separation; but it will generally be found very desirable to restore this separation of the sexes, where Churches are made really and entirely free. Men will feel much more at home, and at their ease, when kneeling amongst men, and women the same way when kneeling amongst women, than they would do if no such separation existed; and a sort of discipline, and a principle of order, will be introduced in this way into Churches, which will be found in harmony with the place, and the service, and the tone of mind in which the service should be followed, and the inconvenience which might arise from the chance juxtaposition of different ranks will be thus provided for. Men of all ranks will be at their ease in the men's seats, and women in the women's seats; whereas, I much doubt whether a laboring man, or artizan, would not feel very uncomfortable if accidentally placed in a free church, amongst women of a rank considerably above his own; and the same with a young woman placed amongst men. It is a distinction marked by the hand of God, and one which has always existed in the Church, and will be found, I believe, to add very materially to the convenience and ease of those Churches in which it prevails, and which commends itself at once when put in practice; but it must again be said, that it is not *absolutely necessary*. A Church may be entirely free, as some are, without it;

though such Churches would, probably, be felt to be far better with it.

The chief objection I have heard made to the separation of the sexes, is, that it destroys the feeling of families worshipping together in Church ; to which I think it may be truly said, that while we would be very loth to destroy any really religious feeling, it may be doubted whether, in this special instance, what seems like a loss would not be a real gain. Let it be granted, that you are less conscious of the boundary line which separates your own family in Church from the rest of the great family of those whom CHRIST has redeemed ; ought you to be sorry for this ? Is it not a real gain to have your Christian sympathies drawn out and extended to other members of Christ's Body, as well as to your own immediate relations ? Is there no fear of narrowness of heart, and selfishness of feeling, when you shut yourself up in your own pew, with your own family, separating yourself, as far as you can, from the rest of the congregation, and almost believing that you and yours are a more special object of Divine favor than others, who have been baptized into the same state of grace as yourself ? The public worship of the Church must not be narrowed into family worship, any more than family worship may be into private prayer ; and as we should rightly call him a selfish, cold-hearted person, and devoid of natural affection, who in family prayer thought only of himself : so should we rightly blame the family, as wanting in the true Christian, Catholic temper, which in Church confined to its own small circle the sympathies which

should be extended to all there present ; and which seemed more anxious, if I may so speak, to get all it could from God itself and its own members, than to throw its portion with open, trustful heart, into the common stock, and ask God's blessing equally on all, and on self last of all. There is too much danger of mistake on this point ; the tendency of the age is—confessedly towards isolation—the isolation of individuals, and the isolation of families ; a tendency which is quite unchristian, and which would lead us to make, each one of us for himself, *his own fireside* the real centre of his life, instead of the altar of God,—to narrow the circle of his sympathies, to shut out from his own home all that is painful and distressing, and then to thank God for his own comforts, without reflecting on the millions who are perishing, body and soul, around, and who, because they are beyond the circle of his family, are also beyond the circle of his sympathies. Religion will never gain its high, manly, self-denying tone, until we have once again, as of old, made God's altar the real centre of our lives, instead of our own hearth.

5. But “If pews are done away with,” it may be said, “pew-rents will be lost, and how are the necessary expenses of public worship to be supported then ?” To this it may be answered, that the man who now subscribes ten dollars a year to the support of the Church, and receives in return a pew for his own private use, may give his ten dollars a year just the same, without demanding any such return for it. “But will he do so ?” Certainly he will, if he is rightly taught

about it. Every one will not do so,—some, perhaps, will withdraw altogether from such a system ; but it would be a want of trustfulness in the goodness, the manliness, the Christian spirit, the self-denial of others, to suppose that, when they view their annual payment in the light of an offering to support public worship, instead of an outlay for their own comfort, and when they see the deep evils of the Pew-System, they will not be glad and forward to give up their pew, and, if need be, to double the sum, as a simple offering to God, which has hitherto been paid for their own convenience. A subscription list, attached to each church, would answer the same end as a list of pew-rents ; and even if the amount subscribed should at first be rather less, would not the gain of a free church, the gain of the hearts of the poor, the gain of the sympathy of every good man, and of the blessing of God, outweigh, a thousand-fold, the loss of a few dollars, paid by a selfish heart for a selfish purpose ? In whom are we really to trust,—in God, or in Mammon ? If we really are, in full sincerity, aiming at the kingdom of God, will not all these things be added unto us ? Which generally succeeds in the end,—high and true principle, or worldly craft ? Has the Church, within the last twenty years, had less actual money offered for its service, because it has repudiated the system of charity-balls, and charity-dinners, and charity-bazaars, fruitful, as they were, in their day ?—or, has not its store been multiplied just in proportion as it has appealed to higher and truer principles, to self-devotion and self-denial ? Let us grant that throwing overboard

the system of pew-rents is something of a venture ; but is it not one of those ventures of faith, which look like folly to the worldly-wise, but which, if made in unfeigned sincerity of purpose, bring God's blessing on them, as it was of old on the barrel of meal, and on the cruse of oil ?

Besides which there is the offertory, which ought to be restored, so as to be gathered every Sunday over the whole congregation. Into this the smallest sums may be cast, as the widow's mite into the treasury ; and when Christian congregations are taught to realize that what they drop into the offertory, unseen by any eye but God's, *is a direct offering to Him*, can we doubt what the result would be ?

6. What if it should be said, "It is impossible to throw open our Churches in the midst of such a population as that of any city ; we shall be crowded beyond measure. The Churches will not hold a tenth part of the people, if they are all really invited to come !" Oh, what a confession this would be ! what a confession, that our Churches are for the private convenience of the few, and not for the spiritual welfare of the thousands of the people ! Happily, no one will be found hardy enough to maintain, seriously, such an objection as this ; for the answer is a simple one,—“ If the Churches *are* insufficient in number and size, then enlarge them, or build more.” No excuse left, then, when all share alike ; no excuse for those who now look round on the deserted free sittings, and say, “ The poor will not come to Church ;” no refuge then in the selfish stronghold of a private pew ; no satisfactory

assurance, after paying the pew-rent, that, whether the multitudes perish or not, pew-renters at least will have ample room for themselves, and their families, and their servants ; no turning away then from CHRIST'S work, and saying, " We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing ;" " We have our Sunday Services, and free sittings, and people do not come to them." When the net is once really let down for the draught, we shall see whether or no we shall not need help for the multitude that throng into it.

But it must be remembered, that, if our Churches really were free, they would at once become available for religious services in a way in which they cannot be now ; for, instead of the one Sunday Morning Service, there might be two—one at 9, and one at 11 ; shorter Services than now, by the division of Morning Prayer, Litany, and Holy Communion. Nay, there might be as many Services all day long as there were clergy attached to the Church ; and families would probably divide, and attend, some one, some another of the Services ; so that a Church which only holds one thousand, might be made equal to the wants of five or six thousand in the course of the Sunday. The truth is, we have fallen into such a stiff stereotype of morning and afternoon prayer, that we can hardly realize what the Church Services might be, if our Churches were entirely free, and no private rights interfered with our work—if our Services were divided, and a sufficient stock of clergy to each Church to admit of the almost indefinite multiplication of the

offices of prayer and praise, of preaching, and of the celebration of the Sacraments.

7. In this one respect the Churches of the Continent set us an example which we should do well to follow. I say the Continental, not the Roman Catholic Churches; for it is not a little remarkable that here, Roman Catholic Churches have been just as bad, in respect of pews, and payments at the doors, &c., if not worse, than those of our own communion. But I do not think that any person of a truthful mind can go into the Churches of France or Belgium—the Church of S. Nicholas, in the market-place at Boulogne, or the parish Church at Ostend, to name the two first Churches we meet with after crossing the English Channel—without feeling how far superior they are in point of freedom and openness; how much more inviting to the people generally; how much more practicable for religious services, than our own pewed and galleried buildings. We may lament most deeply the tinsel gewgaws which dishonor their altars; the dolls dressed up in silk and lace; the painted figures, which mimic rather than represent Apostles and saints, (to say nothing, in this place, of services in a language which but few can understand.) I, for one, shall never forget the feeling of deep depression with which I came out of the Church of S. Ursula, at Cologne, and the utter astonishment I felt that men should be found to suffer so fruitful a theme for the scoffer and infidel as the relics shown in that Church to remain for one day longer; but whatever evils may have grown up in practice out of the Roman doctrine, on the subject of

images and relics, surely he must have but a narrow mind and a narrow heart, who is quite unmoved by the way in which foreign Churches are left open throughout the day, with a clear area, and an atmosphere of reverential quiet, as places of retirement and of prayer for ALL classes. When one sees little children come reverently into Church together, and go down on their knees and hold up their hands in the most perfect simplicity and unconsciousness, before the altar of God; when one sees in the early morning those who are going out to their day's work come into Church on their way, to ask God's blessing on them through the day; when one sees in the evening twilight the throng of high and low, rich and poor, joining together in the low-chanted hymn, as unlike the cold formalism which chills too many of our Churches as it is unlike the vulgar, boisterous irreverence of sectarians; when one sees this, and remembers the dreariness and desolation of most of our own town Churches, one can only say—"Would to God I could see something like this in our city Churches."

8. It must always be remembered that the giving up of pews, and setting our Churches free from this most grievous hindrance to their efficiency, is to be looked on and recommended as *a direct religious offering to God*. Many men seem hardly to know how to set about promoting the spiritual welfare of their fellow-Christians, and think that giving money to building schools and Churches is the only means in their power; and so when they have gone to the full extent of their means in offering of their substance for God's

service, they think there is nothing more that they can do, that everything then rests with the clergyman ; but certainly there are other means besides the giving of money, in which religious works may be aided : personal help, removal of hindrances, thoughtful consideration of difficulties in the way of religion, and the application of a cultivated intellect, of the influence of rank and position in society, of discussion amongst friends, and of personal example to their removal.

It is, unhappily, too true that the favorite ways of benefitting the poorer classes are rather bodily and intellectual than religious, as though men felt QUITE certain about the body and about the reason, but had some secret doubt as to the real benefit of religion to the soul. Thus we have public hospitals, public soup kitchens, public baths and washhouses, all of them most excellent institutions, to which we must most heartily wish God-speed ; and so again we have zeal shown for drawing out the intellectual powers, through education, through popular lectures, through cheap publications of every kind ; and to this too we would wish God-speed. But, surely, if the body and the mind are of importance to the welfare of our fellow-men, the regulation of the affections and the discipline of the will are no less so ; and this is the province of religion alone : nothing else but religion can do this, for there is no principle short of the fear and love of God which has strength and depth enough in itself to dare bid the unruly passions of man be still ; there is one, and one only, sufficient balance to the necessary ills of time, and that is, the hope of eternity.

Now, it really seems that the religious welfare of the mass of the people of this country can hardly be advanced more surely, than by removing that which is felt to be the one great obstacle in the way of their attending public worship ; so that we may look upon the abolition of the Pew System as a very direct way indeed of serving God : in towns, this speaks for itself ; and in villages the same principles apply, with perhaps this difference, that, while the absolute necessity of Free Churches may be felt rather less there, yet every village Church which is made free, will be the example of one more—the weight of one more thrown into the scale against private pews ; and, in this way, those who live in villages may really help those who live in towns, and bear the burden, in part, of that which they are not called to bear entirely.

Can it be supposed for one moment, that men will be found giving their hundreds and thousands a year for works of corporal and spiritual mercy ; and that women will be found giving their personal labor and sympathies, which is the highest charity of all, to visiting the sick and needy ; and others giving themselves with the most entire devotion to the service of CHRIST,—and that such persons will hesitate for one moment, to give up their own pews, and make common cause with us against the Pew System ? Rather, we may reasonably believe, they will sincerely thank those who point this out to them, and remind them of a way of serving God, which they had almost overlooked.

9. It need only be added, that those who may come

forward to advance this matter, should God put it into the heart of any to do so, will meet with a depth and strength of sympathy which can hardly be over-rated. I have reason to know this, and to know that there are many Churchmen, in every rank of life, who (notwithstanding that they at present, of necessity and against their will, occupy pews) do feel most strongly on this subject, and would second any effort made in this direction most warmly: the sympathies of the working classes would be drawn at once towards those who should stand forward in this matter, with the real thankfulness of men to whom honor is offered in a spirit of Christian brotherhood, without being marred, as so many well-meant schemes are marred, by the littleness of a conscious patronizing temper.

As to the way in which any movement of this kind would be welcomed by the clergy, it may be judged of by the Free Churches which are growing up around us in every diocese; and no doubt, ere long, many more will have followed an example so well calculated to win the hearts and move the consciences of those who are proof against argument, and who account for the temporal relief which may be offered them on the score of mere humanitarianism.

What is the use of teaching the mass of the people, children in our schools, and grown men in the pulpit and in private intercourse, that public worship is a matter of universal obligation, the duty of every inhabitant of every parish in this land—what is the use of this, when our Churches say distinctly to the lower classes of society, “ You are not wanted here—no room

here for poverty?" It is worse than idle to teach men the duty of public worship, unless we at the same time *make public worship accessible to them*. And it must be remembered, that attendance on public worship will be ordinarily the great turning point of good or evil. Those who do attend public worship will be generally preserved by a feeling of self-respect, (not to speak here of higher influences,) from the worse forms of evil, and will have the way always open to them for drawing near to God in prayer and Holy Communion, and will have the approval of conscience to support and encourage them, and will lean unconsciously to the side of goodness and of right; whilst those who have snapped this last tie, drift off into the full stream of irreligion—they have the brand upon them of men who are known to neglect all religious duties, and at last, in self-defence, they are almost compelled to take up a hostile position, and from being simply indifferent, become enemies more or less professedly of the faith. Surely this is the true cause of the desire so generally manifested now to make our Churches and services more accessible and more attractive, by the use of music and architecture and decoration of various kinds; not that a deeply religious mind absolutely needs such aids, though he would be a proud man, and a self-confident man, and a shallow thinker into the bargain, who denied their usefulness in cultivating the imagination, cheering the spirit, and dispelling the unchristian gloom with which the savage sullen passions of Puritanism would deface God's goodness and man's praise; but it is with a more direct view to the great mass of those who are

neither actively and decidedly good nor bad ; it is to draw them insensibly into, and then to preserve them within, those tracks of the heavenly pathway, which, when once lost, it is so hard to regain ; it is to prevent their being claimed by, and giving themselves over to, the emissaries of Satan ; it is to keep their hearts open to the appeal of goodness, and to make them value and return the willingly-offered sympathies of good men ; it is to cherish those undefined instincts and yearnings which a sullen Puritanism and irreverent rationalism destroy ; it is to avoid breaking the bruised reed, and quenching the smoking flax ; to avoid snapping the last link, and driving into open, conscious irreligion those who are still hanging between good and evil—this is the reason why we would give so much thought to the throwing open of our Churches, and the rendering our services more cheerful and attractive than they have usually been hitherto.

Surely those who now range themselves, almost as a matter of course, *against* the Church, ragged-school teachers, city missionaries, and other irregular volunteers in the service of CHRIST, would be found swelling the ranks of the Church's laborers, uniting in one strong effort the energies which are now wasted through disunion, did they but see in the parish Church itself something more like Christian life and Christian love, than our pewed and galleried buildings present. Is it fair upon the parish Priest, who desires nothing more than to spend his health, and strength, and life itself, in the Church's work—is it fair upon him to

bind such fetters upon his feet, and then, as in mockery, bid him run his race with speed? Is it fair to say to him, "the Church must remain as it is, gloomy, forbidding, appropriated to the convenience of the few, and you are to be the scapegoat on whose head we will lay the accumulating evils of town and country; we will continue to go on as we have done, sitting through our Sunday services, for respectability's sake, and quenching every spark of life, chilling every glow, putting down every effort, under some of the plausible sounding phrases of the world's conventionalities; we will attend, for our own sake, the Church whose doctrines we deny, and whose discipline we spurn—and when the voice of rebuke is raised too loud to be passed by in silence, when sectarian and infidel unite in denouncing this living death, then we will wash our own hands of the whole matter, and say, "*Ah! if the clergy would but do their duty!*"

But surely the time will come when this duty will be done, and surely its very first utterance will be this: "We will no longer consent to be the mere hireling chaplains of a class; we will be ministers to the whole people, or we will be nothing;—the well-bred guest at the worldling's table, the mere almoner of his superfluities—the sympathy so keenly alive to the convenience, and so indulgent to the prejudices, of one class—so coldly indifferent, so dead, to the scarce restrained curses of the thousands who feel that the Church of CHRIST in our large towns is no Church for them,—surely this will have an end, and the line which separates those who attend from those who neglect Chris-

tian worship, will no longer be the mere index of the influences of the world's society, but will once more become a criterion to distinguish those who do from those who do not love and serve CHRIST.

We do not know who they may be whom it may please God to call to this work, to dare, in CHRIST's name, and in the cause of CHRIST's poor, to incur the ill-will of the worldly hangers-on and hinderers of the Church ; nor does it seem at all certain what means would be the best for effecting the desired end—whether to combine as a special society for this one object, (which, however, could hardly fail of the active co-operation of Bishops, Clergy, and the great body of communicants,)—or whether to spread, by writing and discussion, a deeper sense of the oppression of that death-like nightmare that hangs over us : but this we may certainly believe, that those who do this, will have the blessing of God, and the sympathies of all good men with them, and that they will find a tide of deep and widely-spread feeling ready to swell the stream, and bear down, under the guidance of a Christian temper, all hindrance to the work, and to welcome as their deliverers, from the misery of irreligion on the one hand, and on the other from a heartless formalism, and the littleness of a mere drawing-room ceremonial, those who will awaken and combine, and direct the energies of Churchmen against this evil.

In conclusion, may I say this, (without wasting time in making many apologies for the defects of what has been written above, as though we were never to raise our voice in the service of religion, unless we are quite

sure beforehand of being above criticism in what we say)—may I say this to those who chance to read these pages? If anything here written has found an echo, or has been, in some measure, the expression of your own feelings, then do not, in the name of Him, Whose name we bear in common, do not dismiss the subject from your thoughts; think what may be done in this matter, try what you yourself can do, unite with others, and see what a combined effort may effect; do not shrink from coming forward, and venturing your name and reputation in the cause of CHRIST'S poor. What cowardice such shrinking would be! Do remember that a refined manner and a gentlemanly indifference are not religion; that we need energy and zeal, as well as self-discipline. Do not fear to incur the charge of folly and fanaticism by your earnestness, while you know yourself to be free from the reality. Our LORD did not hide His Face from shame and spitting for us,—shall we hide our faces from it when He calls us to bear it for Him? How is religion ever to be a vital power among us, if we bury our thoughts each of us in the secret of his own heart, and resolve, with true worldly wisdom, not to step down into the sweat and dust, and vulgar bustle of CHRIST'S service, till the way is cleared for us, and the road swept, that we should not soil our feet, and the golden gates of Heaven thrown open to our triumphant march, and men unite with angels in applauding us, though they united with devils in crucifying our LORD? Do dare something, and venture something, and have courage to face the ridicule of the world, and the chance of failure, and the charge

of forwardness and eccentricity. This seems especially a work for laymen ; and if those who may chance to read this will but give themselves, in charity, and in prudence, and in good earnest, to the work, though they may meet with many a sneer, and many a plausible sophism, to discourage, and, if possible, PUT THEM DOWN, yet they may be sure that they will have the truest and sincerest sympathy of hundreds among us, many of whom they themselves, perhaps, will know, and many more whom it may be they will never hear of ; and while no petulance, or trifling, or inconsiderate haste, mars the work, there will be many a voice that will be saying of it in secret—"The LORD prosper you ! we wish you good luck, in the Name of the LORD."

ART. IV.—FREE SEATS?—OR PEWS?

[From the Church Review, July, 1856.]

FREE Seats and Pews have long been struggling together in the Church; and to many, the contest, even in argument, seems yet to be doubtful.

There has been, on the one side, perhaps an overstraining of particular principles; or too much of mere reliance on the private interpretation of some text of Scripture; or a somewhat curt dogmatism, in assuming, as indisputable, the very point to be proved. On the other, there has been so great a quantity of dust thrown into the air, that it is difficult, at first, to distinguish between a Church and an auction-room; between an offering and a purchase; between giving an alms and paying rent. Yet when the matter is carefully reduced down to that which is of the *essence of the difference*, it will be found so plain, that the only wonder is, how Christian men, and sensible men, could ever raise any contest about it.

The first thing needful is, to disentangle the question from side issues, and considerations which may, indeed, (and most happily do,) modify the pew-system, as commonly carried out among us; but which have nothing to do with the *comparative* merits of the two systems, because they *belong equally to both*.

Thus it will not do for the advocate of pews to urge

that, frequently, it is *not all* the pews that are rented ; or, that a certain portion has been reserved by the Vestry as *free seats*. This will not do, we say ; for the *principle* of renting *covers the whole*. The *character* of the Church, as a “pewed-church,” still remains. Probably the only reason a part is free, is because renters enough for all have not yet been found. And, at any rate, the permanence of the arrangement is utterly unreliable. The vestry may, at any time, by a majority vote, sell or rent the whole.

Besides—it is no argument for pewed-churches, *as against free churches*, to say that, in the former, “*part* of the seats are free.” Instead of an argument for pewed-churches, this is really a fatal concession to their opponents ; for if it be so good a thing to have *a part* of the seats free, *how much better to have the whole* ? And again. If any particular proportion of seats in a pewed-church are free—say one-third—it is no argument against a Free Church ; for in a Free Church one-third of the seats are free also. Where there is no difference, there is nothing gained on either side, and nothing is to be argued either way. The *real difference* is to be found in *the remaining two-thirds*, *all* of which are *free* on the one side, and *every one* of which is *sold or rented* on the other. This plea in abatement, so loudly urged by the advocates of pews, must therefore be at once ruled out of court. It is rather too much to expect that the Free-Church system will consent to be struck down by *its own thunder*—and *stolen at that*.

The modified practice dilutes the evils of the pew-system, we grant, and thus renders its ordinary form,

as existing among us, somewhat less injurious. But the general admission of any such dilution, is itself a general confession, on the part of these very pewed-churches, that the evils of their own system were intolerable without it. And their borrowing the remedy from the Free-Church plan, is a confession that they *know* very well where to look for the best cure. In arguing, therefore, the comparative merits of the two principles of action, we must go upon the undeniable ground that *all* the seats in pewed-churches are, or may be, *rented* or *sold*, just as in Free Churches, they are *all free*.

Again: There is no distinction worthy of the name of *principle*, to be taken between seats sold and seats rented. The former is *practically* much the worse of the two. But they are identical in essence. They differ only as the smallpox and the varioloid differ. The latter is merely the milder and more manageable form of the disease.

Again: When we come to the question of the Offertory, and the duty of *giving*, as therein enjoined, it will not do to point to the large "plate-collections" made in pewed-churches on communion occasions, and for various Church or benevolent objects: for *these things are likewise done precisely in the same manner in Free Churches*. Their being done to some extent in pewed-churches, is therefore no argument *against* the free. It is only, as before, an *unwitting concession*. For if it be good to raise a *part* of Church-funds on these high and Scriptural grounds, how much *better* to raise the *whole* in that manner? *And Free Churches thus raise*

the whole. This is only another specimen of the old trick :—taking an admirable, practical feature, from those whom they are opposing, and then immediately turning round, and using it as a weapon *against* the very system from which it was “borrowed.”

Again : It is urged that “courtesy is always sure to give a seat to those who have no pews. Is “courtesy” confined to pewed-churches ? Is there no courtesy in Free Churches ? Besides : That courtesy, as we all know, from experience, cannot *always* be relied on to make strangers at home in seats paid for by other people. It cannot safely be depended on, even for well-dressed strangers—*gentlemanly* strangers—nay, nor yet for handsome and fashionable-looking “*ladies.*” And the meanly-clad poor ? Let *them try it*, if they think there is invariable “courtesy” for *them* ! They will soon find out their mistake ! But even granting that “courtesy” occasionally, or even frequently, is found in pewed-churches, and makes strangers “feel at home :” what argument is that *against* Free Churches, where that delightful “courtesy” is not left to depend upon the momentary caprice of individuals, but is the fundamental *law of the whole house* ? If Christian “courtesy” is thus charming on a small scale, what must it be when made universal, so that *every* stranger may at *all* times “feel himself at home” in *any* seat he pleases ?—Or is this “courtesy” in pewed-churches, valued, like diamonds, *only because of its rarity* ? Here, again, it will be seen that the pew-system has been compelled to steal another small

pinch of Free Church salt, in order to give even the semblance of a savor to its own utter insipidity.

We do not wonder, indeed, at such adroit tactics. Realizing so thoroughly, as we do, what a miserable, stale crust this vaunted pew-system is, we do not wonder that its advocates cannot resist the temptation to purloin a little somewhat more toothsome to make their dry bread go down. Nor, considering the spirit in which their favorite system originated, are we at all surprised when we find them, like economical boarding-house keepers, spreading this sweet butter *as thin as possible*, to see if they cannot make a very little of it go a great way. All this, we say, occasions us no surprise. Their sapless system needs it so intensely, that the craving is irresistible. Indeed, they never consider themselves now-a-days as fit to be seen, except when they have covered their dust-colored coat with so many fresh-looking Free-Church patches, that they have great hope of preventing any discovery of the mean and coarse cloth it was originally made of.

But in fairly carrying on the contest between these two antagonistic systems, no such mixings and borrowings can be tolerated on the field of equal and honorable warfare. One champion has no business to come upon the ground, buckrammed and padded out to imposing proportions, by what he has cribbed from his opponent on the sly. The contending principles on each side must be *stripped to the bare buff*, if we wish to see anything like *fair play*.

We, therefore, discard altogether the plea of "part free ;" or, of "large offertory-collections ;" or, of "in-

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dividual courtesy :” as urged by the advocates of pews. These have no business in the controversy whatever, *except as virtual, and important, and overwhelming concessions in favor of the Free-Church plan* ; for these features, thus “ borrowed ” from that Free-Church plan, are the only things that make the ugly face of the pew-system tolerable, even to its own best friends.

Stripped to things essential, then, the two opposing schemes may be thus stated :—

The Free-Church plan offers the preaching of the Gospel *free to all*. It asks no one to contribute for the “ support of the Church,” except such as have first *heard and received* the Gospel. It asks them to give *then*, only from their *faith* in God, their *hope* of Heaven, and their *love*, both towards the LORD JESUS, Who hath given unto them salvation, and towards their brethren, who are one with them in Him. And the standard of “ how much ” each one shall give, is no other than that which Holy Scripture has set forth,—“ according as *he is able*.” In other words : The *free hearing* of the Gospel is a condition *precedent* to the duty of “ *supporting the Church* ; ” and the *measure of that duty* is God’s *Word*.

The pew-system, on the other hand, does not offer the Gospel free to any ; but furnishes it only to those who have paid for the privilege. It asks a certain rent for the “ support of the Church,” and asks it, not from Christian, but from commercial considerations, the seat being worth just as much “ rent ” to the Church, whether its occupant love God or not. The standard “ how much ” each shall pay, is regulated solely by

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the prominence, convenience for seeing and hearing, and general "eligibility" of the pew, having nothing whatever to do with the "ability" of the giver. In other words: the *paying* for the "*support* of the Church," is a condition *precedent*, without which no man can expect to *hear the preaching of the Gospel*; and the measure of that duty is regulated by *the world*.

These are the points in which the two systems meet and contradict one another. And, therefore, it is within these limits, and on these grounds, and no other, that the contest between them must be fought out. In the above statement and definition, we have neither inserted anything outside the essential antagonistic issues, nor omitted anything important to their full comprehension. We have, it is true, given rather a large margin to the pew-system, out of mere kindness. We shall be compelled to pare it much closer down to the quick, before we get through; but this will do to begin on.

Let us first try the question *historically*, relying upon the saying of the wise man, "*The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be.*"

When the HOLY GHOST descended on the day of Pentecost, and the Apostles preached with tongues, and gathered in the first fruits of full-grown Christianity, we find not a syllable in St. Peter's Sermon about the "duty of supporting the Church," as if *that* was the first thing to be provided for: but the *Resurrection of CHRIST Crucified* was the element of power with which his hearers were pricked to the heart. And

when the converts said, “Men and Brethren, what shall we *do* ?” the answer was not,—“We have sittings in our Upper Room, which we are about to rent. It is your duty to take pews there, at so much a year, that each one of you may keep his own family from contact with any other family during the time of Divine Worship. And we will also have ‘respect of persons,’ so that the differences of your position in the world may be carefully perpetuated in the Church. The richer, therefore, shall have the best seats, at the highest price ; and the poorer shall have those not so desirable, at a lower price. Moreover, if we cannot rent the whole, there will be a few of the worst seats next the door, which may be occupied by paupers, and where they can hear the Gospel without money and without price.” The Apostles, on the day of Pentecost, said nothing like this. If they had, the Gospel would have fallen still-born, at the hour of its birth, and would never have been heard of after. Yet, on the pew-system, this is substantially the first proclamation made when a new Church is built. The consecration of the House of God is scarcely over,—the sound of the voice of the *successor of those Apostles who preached on the day of Pentecost*, has scarcely ceased to echo under its roof,—when the lay auctioneer enters, hammer in hand, and knocks down the seats to the highest bidder.

Nevertheless, the Church in Jerusalem was “supported,” although it had not the aid of the pew-system, which is now thought to be so indispensable. For several years the whole College of the Apostles abode

there, and gave themselves wholly to the ministry of the Word and to Prayer ; many of the Elders were also permanently laboring there ; while seven Deacons were appointed, and maintained besides, and employed more or less as Missionaries and Evangelists, through all the region round ; and large companies of “widows,” moreover, both of Greeks and Hebrews, were daily ministered unto out of the treasury of the Church. No such powerful financial system has ever since been devised. Distribution was made to *every man*, according as he had need. And the Church *grew*. The LORD added thereto *daily* such as should be saved. In a very brief space of time the number of them that believed was about *five thousand*. Now we would like to ask a question :—How long would it take for a parish of an hundred and twenty members to grow to *five thousand*, supporting *Twelve* Apostles, a *large company* of Elders, and *seven* Deacons, besides distributing to all the needy,—*on the pew-system* ?

This wonderful growth of the Church in Jerusalem, is an epitome of Church-growth everywhere else, and ever since. Never, on the face of the whole earth, has the Gospel of the LORD JESUS CHRIST *first* bargained for a temporal maintenance, and *then* proceeded to minister unto the souls of the perishing the treasures of Heavenly grace. Throughout all the Roman Empire the voice of *Free Grace* was freely heard. Whether in the Jewish synagogues, or the open market-place, or the upper chamber, or the private hired house, or the lonely sea-shore, the unbroken law of *freedom* was everywhere the same. And it was in a great

measure *because* the millstone of Mammon was *not* hanged about the neck of the glorious Gospel, that its innumerable enemies were utterly unable to drown it in the depths of the sea. From city to city it ran, with unshackled, mysterious, electrical speed. Province after province was overrun with the sacred contagion. No tax nor tariff checked its course from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart. Even the enormous boundaries of the Roman Empire were not enough to exhaust its energy of conquest ; but it overflowed on all sides, and carried the rivers of salvation afar off into places inaccessible to Roman arms, making the wildernesses and solitary places of barbarism to blossom as the rose. Not alone during the lives of the Apostles, during the ages of miracles, during the bloody seed-time of martyrdoms and Pagan persecutions, was this the universal mode of the growth of the Gospel throughout the nations. Even during the gathering darkness of the Middle Ages, this grand old inviolable tradition of Christianity was handed down, from century to century, uncontaminated by the touch of filthy lucre. Whether obscurely exploring the vast labyrinths of Tartaric tribes, in the interior of Asia, or winning a wide yet transient domain in the Flowery Empire, or breaking the coarse idols of the English Saxons, or subduing the rough Gothic tribes of Europe, or softening the more fiery hordes of Sarmatian blood, or lighting up the gloom of the black forests of Germany, or melting the savagery of Scandinavian seakings, or fertilizing deeply the cold clay of Russian serfdom : everywhere the same invariable watchword

has invariably led the warriors of the Cross to victory. The preaching of the Gospel was *free to all comers*. No *price* was ever charged anywhere, in the whole world, as *first* to be paid, *before* the preaching of the Gospel should be even *heard*. Rich or poor, Jew or heathen, publican, heretic, hypocrite, or harlot—all were welcome to come and hear the words of life, without first *hiring a pew*.

“But,” it may be said, “times and men have changed since then. That plan did well enough in those countries and for those ages of the world. But the Nineteenth Century needs a different mode of proceeding, and men must now be wrought upon by different and more practical methods.”

Our appeal, be it remembered, is now not so much to principles in the abstract, as to the *actual history of the Church*. We are arguing, not on private interpretation of Scriptural texts, nor on philosophical considerations, nor on theoretical hypotheses. *We are building only upon notorious and indisputable facts.*

And on the ground of notorious *fact*, this alleged “change of times and circumstances” we boldly deny. It is no such thing. The phrase is empty—it is a mere delusion and a snare. For how is the Gospel propagated in this our day? Where has it spread at all, with a solid and *bona fide* growth? Let us look closely at it, and see.

During this nineteenth century, thus far, the Gospel has made conquests of no small magnitude in India, in Africa, (both on the West Coast and at the Cape,) in New-Zealand, in Australia, and in these United

States, besides a most wonderful revival within these twenty years in England. If we go beyond the bounds of our own communion, and somewhat further back than the opening of this century, we find the great phenomenon of Methodism sweeping onward with a breadth and force truly astonishing; the Whitefield Revival, the rapid rise of the Baptists, the successful Missions of various bodies of Dissenters in India, in Burmah, in the Sandwich Islands, and those of the South Pacific, and elsewhere. *What had the pew-system to do with any one of these?* Did Wesley make people pay pew-rent *before* he would allow them a chance to be “converted?” Are East Indians first required to pay for the support of Missionaries, *before* they are persuaded to destroy their hideous idols, and turn to the living God? Are the dusky New Zealanders, or the coal-black Africans, *first* brought up to the contribution-box, *before* the Gospel has taught them to “repent and be baptized for the remission of sins?” All these senseless absurdities are necessarily involved in the pew-system, which requires people to *pay* (or promise to pay) *beforehand a certain price, after* which, and *in consideration* of which, they are entitled to hear “the stated preaching of the Gospel.”

Nor is the Church movement in England, or the spread of the Church in this country, any exception to the universal experience of all the rest of Christendom. One great leading feature of the movement in England—one chief element of its power, and of its success—has been its deadly hostility to the Pew System, and the remorseless and unflinching war

which it has waged with pews, and pew sales, and pew rents, in every varied form of the abomination. The measure of popular growth among the masses has been in direct proportion with the successes gained in this war against the heartless exclusiveness of pews. Without this, that movement would have been strangled in its infancy. With it—that is, *with* this large *destruction* of the Pew System—the Church of England has grown more, in numbers, Church buildings, Schools, and Voluntary Offerings of all sorts, for all purposes, ecclesiastical and benevolent, foreign and domestic—she has grown incomparably more, we say, in *twenty-five years*, than in the *three hundred years previous*.

In these United States, the Church has spread very rapidly, indeed, though not near so rapidly as she might have done, on a more scriptural, more sensible, and more powerful plan. The Pew System has prevailed to a very general extent, in almost every quarter of our land. In some dioceses the common rule has been to sell the pews in fee, so that they might pass, like so much bank stock, into the hands of schismatics, heretics, or even infidels. Such owners charge rent to the occupants of their pews, but pocket the whole as they would the rent of a house. Not a cent of it goes to the “support of the Church;” the minister’s salary, meanwhile, being paid by voluntary subscription. In other, and the more numerous cases, the less injurious mode of annual renting has been preferred. The *dilutions* we have spoken of have also very extensively been resorted to, thus giving much

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more of life to the total than the Pew System could ever rightly claim as its own. And yet our *growth* has been sadly hindered. The Church has often, through large sections, felt the tone of her system somehow impaired, and has suffered severely, without knowing or suspecting what it is that hurts her. Look at the veteran time-honored citadels of the Pew System—the old and old-fashioned pewed Churches—how hard and dry they are! There is no more elasticity, life, or growth in them, than in an ancient oyster-shell. They can run on in the old ruts, but they are perfectly certain that ruin will overtake the Church, if those old ruts should ever be departed from. These are not the parishes, nor are such the men, to lead the van of the Church's conquests. No. After waiting year after year, until our very souls are weary, and waiting in vain, for such men to *move on*, it is at length agreed, on all hands, that not among the old pewed Churches, but in its *Mission-work*, is the true *Life of the Church*. The time for the moving in the Valley of Dry Bones, is not yet.

And what is the operation of *Life* in this Mission-work? How does it act? By what method is the Church *first started* in a *new* place? Do men begin with the Pew System full-fledged? They are not such fools. Arrangements are invariably made whereby the multitude of strangers to the Church may first attend freely. There is not a lisp about pew-rent. Seldom is even the plate passed round *after* preaching. *Free seats* are the lure, whereby to get men to come within the sound of the preacher's voice.

Free seats are relied on to fill the room ; and without them a beggarly account of empty benches would be the sole reward of the admirer of pews.

True, it is too generally the case, that when a good beginning has been made on the Free System, the congregation, of its own accord, adopts the other. *That* part of the question we shall consider presently. We only wish to show *now*, that the beginning is made, and must be made, invariably on the *free* plan. Take, for instance, a case mentioned only a few weeks ago in the *Episcopal Recorder*. Christ Church, Dupont's Mills, Delaware, was started in 1851, and has now one hundred communicants. An humble school-house has all this while served them for a Church—*seats free*, of course. They have now completed a beautiful Gothic stone Church, 120 feet long, with a spire 140 feet high, and a fine organ, &c. All this has been done in *five years*, with *free seats*. *Now*, however, the people are so eager for pews, that they were nearly all taken before the Church was completed. The *Recorder*, with strange unconsciousness of the bearing of its words, remarks upon this case, that, "Without in any degree shaking our confidence in the *free* system, as *the first stage in a Missionary enterprise*, it seems to indicate, with an unusual degree of clearness, the period in which it seems desirable to change the *free* into a *pewed* Church." The *Recorder* is too profound for us to fathom its occult philosophy of what is "desirable." To our common-sense way of looking at things, it would seem that a system which had gained 100 communicants, and built a beautiful stone Church, in

five years, to *begin with*, was precisely the best system in the world to *go on with*. But more of this hereafter. We here have, at least, the broad admission that the "Free System" is the true plan for "the first stage in a Missionary enterprise;" that is, that the "Free System" is the *only system* upon which *true Missionary work can be effectively carried on at all*.

The uncontradicted voice of all history and all experience, Primitive, Mediaeval, Modern, European, American, is therefore this, that, in carrying forward Christianity, men are not to be expected, or asked, to *pay in advance* for the Gospel, in order that thus it may be preached to them; but that, to gain any sure foothold anywhere, it must first be preached *free*. And this is equally true everywhere, and in all places, and in all ages, from the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, down to the farthest western settlement in these United States, in the middle of this nineteenth century; or to the remotest islands in the South Sea.

Having now found what the *facts* of history tell us about Free Seats, let us consult the same incorruptible oracle about Pews.

We imported the system from England. Occasionally, from about the time of the Reformation, or a little before, the lord of the manor, on building a Church all by himself, and retaining the patronage in his own hands, would erect a large pew in a prominent position, for his own family; leaving, however, all the rest of the Church perfectly free, as of ancient and universal custom. When Puritanism began to prevail, and men were willing neither to bow in the

creed nor kneel in the prayers, they began to build the backs and sides of Church seats very high, that these indulgences of stiff-necks and stubborn knees might pass undiscovered. As sermons were also of very wearisome length in those days, these new-fangled boxes were admirably contrived, so that, during the discourse, the whole congregation might sink down behind the tall pew-backs into invisibility and slumber. The exclusiveness of this system more and more shut out the masses from the parish Church. The wealthiest and most respectable families had possession of the pews—the respectability of the family being generally measured by the size of the great pew, and the amount of lumbering furniture, stove, table, settees, and stools, which it contained. The system grew harder and harder, the more it flourished. The great body of the excluded were too ignorant to know that all this was a violation of English law ; and too poor, and of too little social consideration, to be able to enforce their legal rights, even if they had known them. The ale-house and the cock-fight, therefore, were the only Sunday solace for *them*, until some ranting Dissenter came along, holding forth by the roadside—*where there were no pews* ; or in the “ Chapel,” or “ Bethesda,” or “ Ebenezer,” where *all the seats were free* ; and thus stole away the hearts of the people from the Church of their fathers !

So far, the results of this miserable innovation, this shameless usurpation, this misbegotten spawn of spiritual pride and social superciliousness, were only evil, and that continually. The clergy were sup-

ported, not by pews, but by tithes ; and whether their Churches were full of worshipers, or only full of pews, made little difference in their income. As for those who had pews, they, of course, paid nothing for the privilege, the Churches being, by law, free to all. A new refinement was, the idea of *renting* seats for money. This was, of course, illegal in the parish Churches, but it was practicable in proprietary Chapels—that is, Chapels which were the private property of one or more individuals. These Chapels, if served by a clergyman who was popular enough as a preacher to draw large congregations, were found to be a good speculation. The pew rents would suffice to pay the minister and the current expenses, and a handsome per-centage on the invested capital besides. This unhappy development *doubly riveted all the mischief of the former abuse*. It made the *income of the clergy* depend upon the Pew System, thus making them interested in continuing it ; and besides that, it made the people feel that they were not merely illegal “squatters” and usurpers of other persons’ rights, but it gave them the proud consciousness that they had “paid” for their seats, and had “a legal right” to get “the worth of their money” in return. This, of course, made them even less likely to grant, than the clergy were to ask, a change.

And such is the shape in which the evil has become general among us. Its supposed financial certainty and convenience ; its facility for keeping families together ; its securing a *quid pro quo*, as the something gained for a man’s own self, in return for the amount

he gives to the Church ; all these are urged, and urged powerfully, by clergy and by laity, in its behalf.

The certainty is imaginary ; for the pew-rent is as likely to be in arrear as any other Church money—so experience testifies. But, at any rate, the Church has always been more liberal on the right system than the wrong, and is even now ready to become so again, as we shall show presently.

Its convenience is a deceptive plea, as hundreds of parish treasurers can tell, who, from the unpleasant reminiscences of years, know how much more laborious and in every way disagreeable it is to dun delinquents for unpaid pew-rent, than simply to carry the alms-basin round on Sunday morning.

Its facility for keeping families together is an euphuistic deception. It means, in reality, that the hiring a pew of one's own renders punctuality unnecessary ; and enables a man, with wife and children, to make a most irreverent and inexcusable irruption into the congregation in the midst of public worship, and yet be perfectly certain that their pew will be *kept empty for them until they arrive*. It is very rarely that, on coming to Church betimes, a family of moderate size will find any difficulty in securing seats together. And for the few times, during the year, when it may be otherwise, what is the real difference ? For the most part, one seat's distance is the furthest move required. And is this so great a matter ? One might suppose that even a young new-married couple, while yet their honey-moon was at the full, might consent to sit some *three feet apart*, and endure this limited absence even

for an hour and a half, without being rendered altogether inconsolable by the cruel separation. Nothing, indeed, proves the emptiness of the advocates for pews more glaringly, than the amount of noise they make about this "separation of families." Those who have practised the system find no serious trouble from any of these things, which are such formidable hobgoblins in the imagination of those who are determined *not* to practise it.

Many reasons, indeed, might be given for the powerful hold which this particular bugbear has taken on the fancy of some people : but it will suffice to notice the two most powerful. In this country of legal equality, the only chance of securing a "position" in society, is by the union of public display with social exclusiveness. A pew in an eligible part of a Church gives a certain position of respectability among respectable people, especially if it is handsomely upholstered, and furnished with richly-bound books. And the legal right to *keep other people out of it*, is absolutely indispensable to the full enjoyment of those who have paid for the right to be in it. The other—and perhaps stronger—motive, is, the instinctive rebellion of "respectable" fallen human nature, against that great truth which proves the power of the Incarnation,—that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female," but we "are all one in CHRIST JESUS." Respectable baptized sinners, in broadcloths and silks, do not like to feel as if they were "all one," in any sense, with other baptized sinners in homespun and calico : and therefore

they prefer to keep the less respectable sinners on the other side of a stout plank, in a pew by themselves, or on a hard bench in the alley, or somewhere far behind them, down by the door. These two are the main roots out of which this great tree of difficulty grows. The less said about the "separation of families," therefore, the more certainly will that objection receive *all the attention it deserves*.

The argument based upon the *quid pro quo* is now all that remains. And we freely own that there is something in it. But that something utterly destroys the new claim, so loudly set up, that pew-rent is to be reckoned as an alms, and as having quite as much of the nature of an "offering" and of "sacrifice," as if it had actually been laid upon the altar of pure free will. We, however, must be permitted to insist upon it, that *quid* is *quid*. The man who rents or buys his seat, pays for something, and gets something for his money. It will not do to say, "He only gets the occupancy of a seat; and *that* he would have at any rate on the Free Church plan: so where's the difference?" This will not do, we say: for we are now considering that argument in favor of pews, which urges that "men are more willing to pay towards the support of the Church when they get something for their money." They therefore *get something*: and it will not do to avoid our reply by turning round in the same breath and protesting that they *get nothing* after all. Will they confess that the pew-system squeezes money out of people on false pretences?—that it swindles? No. That will not do. They *get something*. And

the fact of their *getting something* is just the difference between an alms and a *bargain*. If a poor man comes to Mr. John Smith for help, Mr. John Smith may have the kindness to make him a present of twenty dollars. But suppose that, not being minded to so large generosity, he says to the poor man, "I can't afford to *give* you the money ; but if you have a mind to part with that cow of yours, I'll let you have twenty-five dollars ;" and the poor man consents : who would say that John Smith had *made him a present* of the twenty-five dollars ? Since he *got something for his money*, it was not a present, but a *bargain*—a good bargain or a bad bargain, according to the worth of the cow ; but in either case a bargain—and nothing more than a bargain.

Nor will it do to say that "*the occupancy of the seat is the same in either case.*" We have a right to walk in a public park, and sit on a bench under the trees all day long, if we like, and nothing to pay for the privilege, because it is a free park—public property. But suppose that we take such a fancy to one particular part of the park, that we wish to have it for our own, and to be able to keep other people out of it, what then ? If we can succeed in being allowed to purchase, will it not cost us a pretty penny ? And even if, after we get it, we do not build on it, but only sit on the bench, and enjoy the shade as we did before ; can it be asked, with any common sense, "Where's the difference ?" We have *bought and paid for the right to keep other people out*, who before that purchase had *as good a right there as we*. This exclu-

siveness is of the essence of all property. A man's house would not be his own house, if other people had as good a right to use it as he has himself. It is his own, because he can *keep all others out of it*. His field is his own field, not so much because he can do in it what he will, as because no other man can set foot in it against his will, without committing a trespass. No area can be common property and private property at the same time. The essence of common property consists in the fact that no one man has any more right there than another, and none can, therefore, exclude another. The essence of private property is, that some one man has *more* right there than anybody else, and can *exclude* all others if he pleases. It is this exclusiveness, and this only, which makes a *pew of their own* so sweet a morsel under the tongue of those who "always like to *get something for their money*."

And yet we are gravely told that this price, thus willingly paid for the right to keep other people out of a pew, and which would not be willingly paid under any other consideration, is to be reckoned as an "offering of a pure heart" unto God; and the treasurer of the parish—so it is hinted—after collecting the pew-rents, may keep them in his pocket until Sunday morning comes, and then place them in the alms-basin, and have the prayer for the Church Militant said over them on the altar! If the pew-rent is *alms*, what is to be said of the cost of the pew-carpet and cushions, and morocco-bound books with gilt clasps, and all other furniture of the pew? These sums, we suppose, on the private cash-book, will be charged to the "*Char-*

ity account,”—that sort of *charity*, which begins at home, and ends there, without ever being seen or heard of elsewhere. It would need but a slight extension of the same principle, to include the cost of all the Sunday dresses of the family. Why not? They are for “Sunday” use, and to be worn “to Church;” surely they might just as well be reckoned on the “charity-account,” also. And thus a skillful accountant may cipher up no very inconsiderable amount of charity in the course of a year:—a mode which none, however, are likely to adopt, except those whose annual “total” on the charity account would otherwise be but a cypher. This new mode of calculating “charity” would be, indeed, valuable, if by thus making it stretch more surprisingly than caoutchouc, it could only be induced thereby to cover the greater multitude of sins. We cannot help, in this connection, inquiring, whether a charity, of this generously expansive sort, would not suit those upon whose “religious sensibilities” the “chink of the money,” given at the offertory, “falls as disagreeably as the tap of the auctioneer’s hammer.” It is a very characteristic symptom of the deep perversion, which taints the whole system, that under its debasing and debilitating influence, that very act, which God has ordained whereby to sanctify to us the possession of property, should actually come to be regarded as a *desecration* of the pure spirituality of His worship! Surely, such “sensibilities” have been refined to the most penurious point of delicacy; and we should not wonder, some fine day, to hear that religion

of so exquisitely attenuated a texture, had “died of a rose, in aromatic pain.”

But the worst feature of this popular plan of supporting the Gospel is, that it furnishes selfish men with a very plausible “dodge” for shirking a duty, which is proclaimed in Scripture, and re-echoed constantly by the Church, in tones as loud, and terms as plain, as language can make them. Men are required to *give unto God according to the ability that God hath given THEM*. The *ability of the giver* is the standard of God’s Word, and, therefore, the standard of Free Churches. The pew-system takes as *its* standard, not a man’s ability, but the nearness of his pew to the chancel or the door, as the case may be; or, whether it be in the middle alley, or a side alley, or behind a pillar, or in the gallery. Is *this* the standard for “charity?”—for “alms?”—for “an offering unto God of a sweet savor?” We trow not! This standard has about as much to do with “charity,” as the standard by which a seat in the parquette of a theatre may be had at one price; a place in the boxes at another; and a ticket to the amphitheatre at less than either. Yet this miserable “standard,” which regulates all that is done on the pew-system for the support of the Church, wretched and mean as it is, acts like an opiate on the conscience, and blinds it to all further seeing of that standard which is Divine. It covers a man up from the power of Holy Scripture, and of Scriptural preaching, as a water-proof cloak covers him up from the rain. Sitting comfortably in his cushioned pew, (for which the rent has been duly paid, and charged to “charity-

account,") the solemn reiterations of the Offertory glide by him unheard, or enter in at the one ear, and go out at the other; or, at most, whenever they rub roughly on some spot yet left sensitive in the deadening soul, they stimulate him only to drop a dollar bill—or even a five-dollar bill—into the plate at some casual collection, instead of the usual twenty-five cents. Whereupon the poor man goes home with as much of a glow in his bosom, as if he had been *liberal* that day. And yet, poorly as they are, for the most part, responded to, the Church is deeply indebted to these extra-parochial collections, and private appeals for aid; for they breathe a little Free-Church life and love into a system that has none of its own. Without this portion of our ordinary operations shining before men, there would be, in the working of the pew-system, only light enough to make "darkness visible."

The standard of the *world* being thus set up in the Church itself, to the exclusion of the standard unfolded in *the Word of God*, the question naturally arises, "How can the pew-system be so efficient for the support of the Church?" This is its one great boast,—that it "supports the Church;" and that it is "the only plan on which the Church can be supported." If this claim be true, then the Church ought to be better supported in this country than in any other; because in this country the pew-system is more generally adopted than in any other. Let us look at *facts* once more.

The Church in Jerusalem had all things common,—but the abundance of this support did not come from pew-rents. St. Laurence, at Rome, fed 1500 widows

and poor from the treasures of the Church, but there were no pews rented in those days in St. Peter's. From thenceforward, in many lands, the clergy have been many times more numerous than with us; have often been rolling in wealth, living in palaces, vested in silks and velvets, purple and fine linen, and rich in silver and gold, and precious stones; Bishops have been barons and princes, and received the revenues of principalities: but all this while no man had yet invented pews. In England, pews have seldom brought in any revenue, except in Proprietary Chapels, and among some of the Dissenters; while the wealth of the Church—such as it is—comes partly from tithes, and partly from landed endowments—the present remnant of the real estate given by the piety of individuals, in former generations, and of the *whole* of which the Church has *not yet* been plundered by the State. But surely *this* country must make a better showing. This country, where the pew-system is more general than it has ever been in any other, must certainly “support the Church” better than was ever done elsewhere. You really think so? Then open your ears, and hear *the whole land re-echoing, from one end to the other, with doleful complaints as to the starvation point of support*, which is the *general result* of the generally adopted PEW-SYSTEM? Let these two notorious facts—the general pew-system, and the general *starvation* “support of the clergy”—stand up, cheek-by-jowl, together,—where they belong. Let any man deny either the one or the other of them,—if he dare. Let him

prove that the one does not *account* for the other,—*if he can*.

The testimony of history, as to the *facts* of the two systems, is now, we trust, sufficiently clear. To measure their full significance, however, we must go below the facts, to ascertain the *great and leading principles* which are embodied in them. In no other way can we fairly and fully bring the two systems up, broadside against broadside, to try their metal with one another.

In the history of the Creation of the world, when we read of the making of Man, male and female, there is immediately added the first great law of humanity, as given to the first Adam: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." And when the second Adam came to redeem that humanity which had fallen under the first, the great law of the new creation was the perfect parallel to that of the old. The Church, which is CHRIST'S Body, was by Him commanded to "Go and teach *all nations*,"—"Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*." The Ministry were sent forth to be catchers of men; not to organize a system which would keep the greater part of them from all chance of being caught. St. Paul, in the true spirit of a fisherman, was all things to all men, that by all means he might gain some. CHRIST died for *all* men, and it was the business of the Church to bring this saving Gospel home to *all* men. Therefore, "*Come ye*," is the universal invitation. The volume of Holy Writ closes its tremendous appeals to men with this its latest voice,—one which

was intended to re-echo, without ceasing, until the dawning of the Day of Judgment:—"The Spirit and the Bride say, *Come*. And let him that heareth say, *Come*. And let him that is athirst, *Come*. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life *freely*." And with such invitations, thus given, it is no wonder that the LORD *added* to the Church *daily* such as should be saved;—no wonder that nations flocked to the Ark of God as doves to their windows. To increase, to multiply, to grow, to gain, to gather in—this is the chief work the Church is ordained to do. She is the great treasure-house of God's grace, and she must draw all men unto her, that they may receive of CHRIST, and be saved. Growth by the Spirit; growth by the Bride; growth by the Ministry; growth by the voluntary labors of the laity; growth by the spontaneous coming of "whosoever will," that he may take the water of life *freely*: this is the one prime, all-controlling, all-overwhelming instinct, the indispensable and ineradicable *law of life*, to the Church of the living God. This must be obeyed *first*, no matter what else may be postponed or neglected. It is impossible that any *practical* consideration can ever, under any circumstances, be for an instant weighed against it. Whatever clashes with this, therefore, must be done away. Whatever impedes it must be cut asunder. Whatever smothers out the life of it, must itself be destroyed.

The pew-system, on the contrary, says "Come" to nobody, except to those who have bought or rented pews. The essence of it is not, as we have already

shown, in obtaining the right to *use* a seat, for *that* exists equally on the other plan : but its essence is, that it gives, for money, the right to *keep other people out* of a seat. The legal right to *exclude*, is the soul of the system. We boldly appeal to the experience of every Rector of a large and “successful” pewed-church, who “has not a single pew that is not rented,” whether his attempts to get the poor and needy to come to Church, have not been almost wholly paralyzed by the impossibility of getting over the repugnance of these people to “intrude” into “other people’s seats.” Poor folks will not thrust themselves upon that “courtesy” which, even if it utter no rude word, yet constantly greets them with a *look* that says, as plainly as any tongue could speak : “What business have *you* here ? This is not *your* pew !”

And the strong tendency of the system to promote *staying away*, operates largely even on those who take pews. Every Rector of a pewed-church knows how common it is for heads of families habitually to absent themselves from the worship of the Church. They *pay* for a pew ; and then, satisfied that they have done their share for “the support of the Church,” they feel as if they had a right to be absent as much as they please. Thus, even when the pews are all “taken”—except the preacher or the occasion be an extraordinary attraction—they are, on an average, *not half filled*. “There is room,” indeed, as truly in our pewed-churches as in the King’s Festal Hall, at the Marriage Supper ; yet the hungry crowds in the streets and lanes of the city, instead of being “compelled to

come in," are carefully *kept out*. In vain does the patient and laborious clergyman say, *Come*. In vain do the Spirit and the Bride say, *Come*. The pew-system, like Satan under the tree in Paradise, impudently contradicts the Spirit and the Bride, and, with cold-blooded yet eager mercilessness, reiterates, in hoarse yet energetic whispers of indignant selfishness:—" *Stay away ! Stay away !*"

Hence it follows, as a matter of course, that while the Free Church plan is a full embodiment of that first great law of the Church's life—*growth*—the pew-system has never been so much as suspected of any such tendency. Not even the most fanciful or the most ingenious of its many advocates has ever hinted that the pew-system was a valuable auxiliary in a *missionary* enterprise, or an efficient ally in carrying on the Church's *conquests* from the domain of the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is much more powerful in bringing a *flood of worldliness into the Church*, than in converting worldlings to a life of faith. So long as there is any stomach for vigorous conquest for the Church, free seats carry the day. When conquests are over, when no further growth is looked for, and when a congregation is ready to repose from past toils and payments, and begin respectably and comfortably to *stagnate*: then, as the *Recorder* expresses it, "it seems desirable to change the *free* into a *pewed* Church." Certainly; by all means. The pewed-church is incomparably *better to stagnate in*, than the *free*. That process may there be carried on without any fear of serious disturbance: for in that system not a

pulse beats, nor a nerve thrills, nor a fibre of its frame can feel, in any true sympathy whatever, with that which is the FIRST GREAT LAW OF LIFE in the Church.

There are difficulties, of course, in the working of the Free Church system, as in all others ; and they are worthy of a full and patient investigation, which we may hope to give them at some future time. One of these is the difficulty of maintaining a definite pastoral tie, a recognized and tangible connection between the priest and the people of his flock. Another is, the mode by which Churches shall hold and administer their temporalities, and be represented in Convention. The full tabularization of statistics would also be very valuable, could full statistics only be obtained. But these are matters of subordinate importance, and we cannot dwell upon them now.

To diversify and enliven the discussion of abstract principles and general results, however, let us examine a few details, merely by way of a sample.

The Church of the Advent, in Boston, is the newest of the large parishes in that city, the only one, except St. Stephen's, conducted on the free-system, having no proper Church of its own, worshipping at first in an upper-room, and now in an ugly old dissenting meeting-house, being, for the greater part of its parochial existence, under episcopal *taboo*, and with scarce any fraternal "exchanging" with other clergy. The other and older parishes are pewed, have excellent buildings of their own, have been in favor with their Bishop and each other, and have had not a single one of the obstacles

to contend with, that have embarrassed the progress of the Advent. Yet the latter has run ahead of them all, having now 406 communicants; and the offertory, for the past year, has yielded \$9,620 23,—about \$23 70 for each communicant. Nearly the whole congregation is largely made up of people of moderate means, and *mostly of the poor*.

The Church of the Holy Communion, New-York, occupies so prominent a place in the list of Free Churches, that it ought to be mentioned here, in order to remove popular misapprehensions, if for no other reason. It has been stated that it is composed mainly of the rich. This is a gross error. Of its 250 communicants, only a little more than one-tenth belong to that class. About four-tenths belong to the middle class; and fully one-half to the *poor*. The average of the offertory, for several years, has been about \$3,000 for parochial purposes, and about \$4,000 for Missions and other Church objects—an average of \$28 for each communicant. This \$7,000 a year, however, is *exclusive* of all that has been done for St. Luke's Hospital, and for the admirable Institutions and operations more immediately connected with that Church. What all these would amount to, we have not been able to ascertain; but so far as our limited knowledge can trace the truth, the total would be, at the least, between *three and four times as much*. What the sum really is, God only knows. And when to all this is added the influence this Church has had in promoting the beauty and the true devotional spirit of our Services among

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all classes of Churchmen, and in quickening and multiplying the labors of love now so vigorously pushed onwards in so many quarters, we may well say, that of all the Churches among us, there are few that we could not better afford to lose.

The statistics of Christ Church, Elizabeth, New-Jersey, the most successful Free Church of this country, outside of a large city, are given in Article V.

In Grace Church, Albany, communicants 90; one-third of them poor, just able to live; not a single man of wealth in the congregation. Offertory for last year, \$1,377 83—average for each communicant, \$15 31. This is a larger proportion than prevails in St. Paul's, (a fashionable pewed Church in the same city,) even *counting in the pew-rents as so much alms*. In the Holy Innocents, in the same city, the proportion to each of 110 communicants is about \$12, the congregation being largely composed of British immigrants of the laboring class. The same is the average in the Holy Innocents, New-York. In St. Paul's, Newark, \$13. In Christ Church, Vicksburg, \$16 66. In the Church of the Advent, Brownsville, Texas, \$50. *There are no pewed Churches in the land, with congregations of similar character, and under similar circumstances in other respects, which equal, much less surpass, these proportions*. When a worse system has been so long in use in this country, and when habits of stinginess towards religion have been so long deeply ingrained in every rank of society, it takes a long while before the results of a new system can be made to do justice to its inherent strength. But with the beginning al-

ready so well made, and such wholesome examples before his eyes, no faithful and laborious man need any longer believe that it is the pew-rents only that keep him above (or *at*) the starvation point. This is a very tolerable degree of success, even as the advocates of pews reckon success—in *dollars and cents*.

But the great triumph of the Free System is in the character and composition of the congregations. We have been called “the Church of the Rich” long enough. The time is rapidly coming—and Free Churches are nobly hastening it—when this will sink from the dignity of a reproach against us, into the turpitude of a slander. Free Churches attract all classes, and in *very fair proportions*. They do not skim off the rich cream of the social dish: but, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, here pray and praise the LORD, side by side. The Church of the Advent, Boston, has worshippers of every kind, in fair proportion,—few of rich, more of moderate means, and most of poor. The proportions in the Holy Communion, New-York, we have already given. Grace, Albany, as we have mentioned, has no man of wealth; some few professional men; and only twelve or thirteen families able even to keep a servant. The Holy Innocents, Albany, mainly British laborers. Ascension, Frankfort, sees the Governor of Kentucky often worshipping in the seat next to a laboring man. St. John’s, Louisville, Kentucky, communicants 150, principally from the poorer classes, and those in moderate circumstances,—clerks, mechanics, foundrymen, and sempstresses. The Holy Cross, Troy—communieants 150, in moder-

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ate circumstances, except about twelve individuals, who may be called rich. Grace Church, Petersburg, Virginia—communicants 185, two-thirds of them from the laboring population. St. James's, Syracuse—communicants 100, from all classes, a majority of them persons in very moderate circumstances. Brownsville, Texas—of all classes. Key West—communicants 98, mostly from the poor, and from the Methodists, though some of the first men of the place belong to the Church also. St. John's, Lancaster, is a remarkable specimen of the energy of the Free-Church system. By its means a congregation of 200 to 300 in the morning, and some 500 in the evening, mainly poor, systematically worship God, and hear the Gospel preached unto them, where, on the pew-system, it would have been ridiculous to attempt anything. It is all clear conquest. The old Church was abundantly sufficient for all the "Episcopalians" in the place. But, perhaps, as a classified illustration, the analysis given of the 61 communicants in the Church of the Holy Innocents, New-York, although a young, and as yet feeble enterprise, will give us as good an example as any, of the way in which the Free-Church plan penetrates all the *strata* of society, taking its largest proportions from the lower, which are always the most numerous class :—

Retired from business.....	6
Merchants.....	5
Lawyers and Physicians	6
Retail Traders	4
Clerks	6
Teachers.....	5
Mechanics.....	10
Sewing Women.....	7
Laborers	12—61

This is giving the Gospel something like *fair play*. And when, with a congregation composed of such materials, the proportion of offerings rises to so high a figure, what would it not do in the great pewed-parishes of our large cities, where pew-rents and fashion, silks and satins, feathers and flounces, leave little or no room for the poor?

We know well that it may be urged, in reply to these imperfect statistics, that they are to be accounted for, perhaps, by local peculiarities, or by the character and zeal of individual clergymen. We will, therefore, take more particularly the working of the two systems, in two different places, in each of which the *same clergyman*, at different times, tried both plans, and with results highly characteristic of each.

Let us begin with St. Paul's, Key-West, Florida, under the Rectorship of the Rev. C. C. Adams. There the old Church (blown down) was rented. The new Church, built in 1848, was *free*, and the difference soon began to be felt. The communicants increased from 15 in 1848 to 98 in 1856; the monthly offerings from \$3 or \$4, to \$20 or \$30. The Church was *always out of debt* on the free plan. The Rector's income of \$900 a year was during all that time paid quarterly, with *perfect punctuality*, never once failing to be ready when called for. The poor were attracted, and an impulse was given to the Church, *over all the sects in the place*.

The other case is that of Christ Church, Vicksburg, under the Rev. F. W. Boyd, the late lamented Patterson, and the Rev. Mr. Lord. The latter part of the

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pew-system, and the beginning of the free, were both during Mr. Patterson's Rectorship.

The Parish was organized in 1839 ; Church not built and consecrated till May 3, 1843. Two days after consecration the pews were sold. The Rev. F. W. Boyd was Rector, for two years, at a salary of \$1,200 a year. He then resigned, his salary being in arrear \$1,050 ; and \$1,225 being due from pew-holders !

The Rev. S. Patterson was called in September, 1845, at a salary of \$1,000 a year ; of which he afterwards voluntarily gave up \$200 ; and yet, even at this reduced rate, in less than three years it was in arrears to the amount of \$436. The remedies proposed were, *increase of the rent* on each pew, and a *further reduction* of the Rector's salary ! In May, 1849, the arrears had increased to \$599. In June, after "Resolving" that not more than \$600 a year could be relied on from pew-rents, for the salary, they coolly voted that the Rector's salary consist of the pew-rents, whatever they may be ; the arrears of pew-rent going to liquidate the arrears of salary ! There was evidently little comfort in this prospect ; and accordingly, by the end of April, 1850, the arrears of salary had mounted up to \$704 95. At this point the pew-system—that indispensable means of "supporting the Church"—was *abandoned in despair*. All the pews, (except three, likewise added soon after,) were thereupon declared FREE, and a new era at once began. *The salary has never been in arrears since*. It started on the free-system, at \$800, and has since steadily risen.

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The quota assessed for the Bishop's salary is promptly paid in the same way. After Mr. Patterson's death, of yellow fever, in 1853, Mr. Lord was called, at \$1,400, besides a life-policy costing \$160 a year; moreover, a parsonage was purchased, and put in complete repair, at a cost of some \$3,500; all which, with \$200 added to the salary in Easter, 1855, makes his income equal to \$2,000 a year. Nor is this all. Other contributions for Church objects have increased in a similar manner. During the past year they have amounted to \$2,902 61, besides the Rector's salary. During the reign of the pew-system, the grounds of the Church were uninclosed; hogs, and worse nuisances still, were at home in the basement. The ground is now enclosed, and planted tastefully with trees and flowers, in the midst of which rises the monument of the lamented Patterson, standing under the shadow of those trees which his own hand had planted. The ordinary attendance at Church has nearly doubled, the gain being from the middle and lower classes, and the *young men*, who had been kept away mainly by the bugbear of *pews*. The number of communicants has increased to 120, of whom 117 have been known to commune on one day. An organ, to cost \$1,800, has been ordered, and is subscribed for; and further accommodation for colored people is provided in the gallery. Every Church call is answered promptly, cheerfully, easily, and to the full amount, and sometimes more.

These are specimens of the mode in which the Church is "*supported*" by pew-rents, and "*must certainly go down*" under the system of free-seats. Our

advice to doubters may all be summed up in two words—*Try it.*

But this whole question of “support”—though satisfactorily disposed of even by what we have said—must rightfully be placed on far higher ground. “The Church *must be supported*,” says one. “How can the clergy labor and preach the Gospel, if they be not *supported*?” asks another. “The first requisite for success,” chimes in a third, “is a *competent support* for the minister.” In England, they will not even consecrate a new Church, until there is some endowment secured for the permanent *support* of the parson. The odious prominence thus given to the matter of “*support*,” is a very characteristic commentary upon the profound scheme of successful finance which the Church of our day so generally adopts, namely: The selling her birthright of a *Free Gospel*, for that wretched mess of pottage known as the pew-system. She devours the proceeds with as little satisfaction as Pharaoh’s lean kine experienced in swallowing their fatter fellows; and finds, at length, that one mess of pottage—and such thin pottage, too—is not enough to prevent, for ever after, the pangs of returning hunger. “Give! Give!” is the cry of the famishing clergy, from Dan to Beersheba. The ministers of CHRIST’S Church are almost starving, because this pew-renting Church does not give her *Reverend* “Scholars and Gentlemen” as much to live on as men of the world give to draymen, and third-rate clerks, and French cooks. This state of things is disgraceful. The half-suppressed cry of pinched-up clerical poverty is too

sadly reluctant, to be feigned ; is too real, to be longer disregarded. And yet that such a cry should be raised in the midst of, and everywhere throughout, a Church so abounding in wealth as ours, is a burning shame. There must be “something rotten in Denmark.” What is it ? Who can tell us ? Let us examine it for a while, patiently and honestly, and we shall find out.

“How shall they hear without a preacher ?” saith St. Paul. And that is what we all say. There is a great deficiency in ministerial supply. What remedy is proposed ? Everywhere we hear but one : “Pray ye to the LORD of the harvest.” Very good advice—none better. Men, therefore, pray, or appear to be praying, very earnestly ; but they do *nothing more*,—and there is an end. The deficiency is *not remedied*.

We have not yet reached the cure, then. Let us go on to the next step with St. Paul : perhaps we may learn something of him. *He knew*. He then continues :—“How shall they preach, except they be sent ?” These words are nothing new to us ; we have heard them a thousand times before. But stop a moment, and let us think what they really mean. “Except they be *sent* ?” “*Sent* !”—Well, that *does* sound strangely. Come to think of it. That is not the way we talk now-a-days. What has the *sending* to do with it ? Of course a man must be ordained before he ought to preach ; but will his ordination find him in bread and butter ? Will it pay house-rent and coal-bills ? Will it support him, and his wife, and family ? “How shall

they preach, *except they be supported?*" *That's* the way we talk in this nineteenth century! Yet St. Paul said nothing there about being *supported*. Curious that he should seem to *take it for granted* that they would be supported, is it not? *We* never take *that* for granted! We know better! St. Paul must have lived in a very enthusiastic age! "It was an age of miracles then!"—and so we shrug our shoulders, and let it pass: when, if we would but push the matter a little further, we might chance to light on a grand discovery.

St. Paul evidently could not have forgotten the duty that lies upon Christians to "*support*" their clergy, as we call it. Anybody that has ever heard the Offertory read, knows those unsparing words of St. Paul, to the rich and luxurious Corinthians:—"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your worldly things?" And again, to the same:—"Do ye not know, that they who minister about holy things live of the sacrifice; and they who wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the LORD also ordained, that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." And again, to the "foolish Galatians," he says, with a short, sharp, and searching severity, which ought to stir the hearts and consciences of both preachers and hearers to the depths, every time they say or hear it:—"Let him that is taught in the Word minister unto him that teacheth, in all good things. BE NOT DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED; FOR WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH THAT SHALL HE REAP." This is St. Paul's doctrine about

supporting the clergy : and it is strong enough, in all conscience. But why did he not mention it in the other place first quoted ?

It was simply because St. Paul understood the Gospel so much better than we do. It was because he never conceived of such madness as trying to get men to *bargain how much they would pay* for the Gospel, *before* the preacher was to begin to preach ! It was because he was determined not to let the first impression of such mercenary filthiness blind the eyes or stop the ears of that city of merchant-princes—those revelers in all that was exquisite in art, wealth, and refined sensuality,—it was for this reason, that he chose *that very city* as the place where to labor, with his own hands, at his humble trade of tent-making, so that he might not be chargeable to any of them, but give them the Gospel FREE, *in every sense*. St. Paul knew that *works*, to be truly *good* works, must be works of *faith*. He knew that faith cometh *by hearing*, and not *before they begin to hear*. He does not therefore tell them to support their preacher, in order that he may preach unto them. And the preacher is not to wait for a support, before he shall begin to preach. But he must preach because he is sent, not because he is “supported.” And he must be supported, not in order that he may preach, but because he does preach. It is not a bargain on either side ; but a duty on both sides. Preaching comes first. Faith follows, as the blessing, upon hearing the Word. And then the good work of supporting the ministry comes last of all, as one of the fruits of faith. To put this

good work as one that can, by any possibility, be rightly done *before Faith*, is to reverse the Gospel, and to turn it *completely inside out*.

Therefore, in all St. Paul's strong commands on this subject, he never leaves us in any doubt as to which comes first. A man "planteth a vineyard" *first*, before he "eateth of the fruit thereof." He "feedeth the flock" *first*, before he "eateth of the milk of the flock." The Apostle says, truly, "we have sown unto you spiritual things," *before* he asks, "is it a great matter if we shall reap your worldly things?" Men *first* "minister about holy things," before they have any right to "live of the sacrifice;" they *first* "wait at the altar," *before* they are "partakers with the altar." So, "preach the Gospel" comes *first*; "live of the Gospel" comes *afterwards*. Men must *first* be "taught in the Word," *before* they are bound to "minister unto him that teacheth in all good things." And then comes the stern, the clear-ringing warning against precisely what the Pew-System has done:—the Apostle straitly charges us, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." He must sow *first*, and reap *afterwards*. To reverse this heavenly order, as the Pew-System does, throughout, is to deceive ourselves, and to mock God. We deceive ourselves when we trust to that Pew-System, which paralyzes us, as the main reliance for the "support" of the Church. And we mock God, when His Church, though rolling in wealth, leaves His priests to starve.

But priests may learn, as well as people, from these

sharp, soul-cleaving words, “ Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap.” The clergy have sown cowardice, and reap starvation. So long as they speak with weak lips, and with a stammering tongue, upon the duty of giving, and giving with that abundance which is required by the law of love,—so long will their poverty pinch their cheeks, and leanness cover their bones. So long as they “ fear to offend the laity” by preaching what they ought, so long the laity will *not* fear to offend both God and them, by doing what they ought not. If the clergy, therefore, reap emptiness, let them look to it whether they have not sowed *chaff*, instead of wheat.

The Church, with instinctive fidelity, follows closely after Holy Scripture. She does not pretend to any ability to improve upon St. Paul. Preaching first, practising afterwards. The true old-fashioned mode of pewed-churches is, to make the collection before the sermon, lest something in the sermon might, perchance, move the conscience to be more liberal than “ Mr. Worldly-Wisdom” has determined on beforehand. The Church, however, orders the offertory *after* the sermon, not before ; and immediately after, in order that the preaching of the Word may be immediately embodied in works of faith. She does not believe that there is any virtue worth relying on, in works done “ *before* the grace of CHRIST, and the inspiration of His Spirit.” She says of them—in words so admirably descriptive of the beauties of the Pew-System, that we cannot re-

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sist the temptation to quote them in full—she says (Article XIII.) that they—

“ Are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in JESUS CHRIST; neither do they make men meet to receive grace, . . .
. . . yea, rather, for that they are *not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done*, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin ”

Thus, then, the two systems stand compared. On the one side, the first thing sought is the preaching of the Gospel : on the other, the first and foremost object is the *pay*. On the one plan, the duty of supporting the Church follows as a consequence of preaching : on the other, the preaching follows as an enjoyment consequent upon supporting the Church ; in strict accordance with that popular axiom, which embodies the whole philosophy of the Pew-System, in its proper relative order : “ No pay, no preaching.” On the one hand, the *motive* for paying to “ support the Church,” is love to God and love to man : on the other, the only motives are selfish—selfish for one’s own exclusive comfort, or for that of family, or for the respectability of social position. On the one hand, the *standard* of the amount to be given is God’s own standard,—*the ability of each man*, according as God hath given him : on the other, the standard is the voice of *the world*,—how much other people give for similar pews ; or, how much *that* pew will fetch at auction.

In *History*, the one is of Pentecostal birth, and from thenceforward the invariable path to all the real conquests the Church has ever gained in any age, even in

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this our own land, and in these our own days. The other, is of Puritanic birth, stealing, surreptitiously and illegally, into the Church, and thenceforward invariably blighting her growth, stifling the breath of her freedom, stiffening the pliant energy of her members, starving her clergy, and so choking up the River of Life—of which she is the appointed channel—that its irrepressible waters are forced over their lawful banks, and run to waste in strange pastures, whose irregular fertility shames the barrenness of the very “Garden of the Lord.” Even in the mildest form of the evil, we find that all its real ornaments are jewels stolen from the very system it would fain destroy; while, at the moment of its loudest boasts about its success in “supporting” the clergy, there is a more universal and more undeniable outcry against the “starvation-point” of that “support,” than ever any part of the Christian Church has been compelled to raise before.

In *Argument*, we have seen that the advantages of a “certain income,” and “keeping families together,” and “getting something for one’s money,” are no sufficient justifications of the Pew-System. Even granting that the assertion as to income were true, will they ask us to weigh the *souls of men*, who are now *kept out*, against a few more *dollars* to be gotten in? And shall men’s souls be made to kick the beam, as of less weight in the scales of the Church, than Mammon? That some respectable families may say their prayers more comfortably, is no sufficient reason for excluding hundreds and thousands of other families from any

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chance to worship at all. Nor is it any comfort to think that a few well-to-do men “get the worth of their money ;” when thereby the masses of the poor outside are kept from getting even so much as a “hearing” of that Gospel which may open to them the gates of Paradise.

In *Essential Principle*, we have found that the one system follows the order of St. Paul : the other reverses it. The one puts Faith before Works : the other, Works before Faith. The one publishes the Gospel in the order in which CHRIST and His Apostles delivered it : the other turns it wrongside out. “*Free Grace*” is the motto over the doors of the one : “*Grace sold here*,” over the doors of the other. The one, with the Spirit and the Bride, says “*Come :*” the other, with the Flesh and the Devil, says “*Stay away !*” The quickening principle with one is the love of God : with the other, the love of *money*. The instinct of the one is life and growth : of the other, stagnation and death. The one plants the mustard-seed of Faith, and waters and trains it up to a goodly tree, with great boughs, and leaves, and fruit : the other takes the well-grown tree, turns it upside down, buries its leafy boughs deep in the earth, leaves its naked roots to harden in the dry air ; and then wonders why it does not grow !

In *Practical Results*, we find that the one preaches the Gospel to the poor, as fully as can be desired : while the other has clothed us, in popular estimation, with the wretched reproach that we are “the Church of the rich,”—a reproach which is, in God’s sight, as loathsome a covering as the shining white scab of the

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leprosy. And it appears, also, that even in income, the free system is the better of the two : and that, as in other cases of compact with the devil, men's souls are sure to be lost ; while the arch-fiend, at the same moment, cheats his dupes out of the very price which tempted them to ruin. The devil's gold-pieces turn to slate-stones : the clergy who cling to the Pew-System for a "support," cry aloud from hunger. And no wonder ! How should it be otherwise, when, in the very House of God, Mammon sits aloft upon the throne of Love ; Exclusion is the law of the Temple built for Communion ; and the sound of the voices of St. Paul and St. James—nay, of the LORD CHRIST Himself—is drowned by the soulless, galloping gabble of the auctioneer. There is but one more step to be taken in this direction. Tear down the glorious standard, bearing the monogram of CHRIST and His Cross, which of old gave the Empire of the Roman world to a follower of the Lamb, and which has ever since led Christendom to victory. Tear it down, we say. Run out, in its place, the little red flag. And inscribe upon that, if you dare, the trumpet-toned watch-word of Christian warfare,—'Εν ΤΟΥΤΩ νίκη,—*Conquer*, in THIS !

The two systems, then, stand opposed to one another, somewhat mixed and mingled in practice, indeed ; but the one, in essence, a service of GOD : and the other, of Mammon. Like Gerizim and Ebal, the mountains of the Blessing and the Curse, so these two gigantic foes stand up, face to face, in deadly earnest, giving the lie to one another. On the broad and gen-

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erous shoulders of the one, rests a robe of the richest perennial verdure, ever watered by the dew of Hermon, which falleth upon the Hill of Zion. On the bald and peeled scalp of the other, blight and barrenness are spread out, like the dreary drought and desolation of Gilboa, where the Lord departed even from His own Anointed, and left him whose love passed the love of women, to fall beneath the sword of the uncircumcised.

It is high time, moreover, for the Church in America to take her choice between them. "How long halt ye between two opinions?"—might as startlingly be asked of us now, as of ancient Israel on the slopes of Carmel. All round us, are rapidly multiplying the signs, that it is to the "little Flock" the LORD God is making ready to give the Kingdom. All round us the old and numerous foes of the Church are preparing to make themselves an easy prey, when the Day of the LORD shall come. Rome has, at length, repudiated her lying claim to antiquity, thrown off the mask of impudent deceit, and now dates her creed, not from CHRIST, and St. Peter, and St. Paul, but from the decree of Pope Pius IX., on the 8th of December, 1854. In this land, Romanists are largely deprived of their aggressive power, being compelled to dilute their Popery so extensively with Protestantism, that its best friends in Italy would hardly know it. They are weakened, also, by the political suspicion under which they labor, being the only body of Christians which invariably mixes itself up with politics: while our rapidly-growing prestige, among the wiser men of all

parties, is solely due to the fact, that we confine ourselves wholly to religion, and let politics alone. Therefore it is, that the threefold cord of the Church is, even now, the strongest band that binds this Union together. And, finally, the innumerable desertions from the ranks of Romish immigrants, are a fearful foretaste to them of the falling away in their numbers, by the time another generation shall have still further transformed their ignorant masses, by the education and the atmosphere of freedom. And the tens of thousands thus falling away—who shall gather them in ?

On the other hand there is not a sect in the land, no matter how bitter, in time past, against the Church, which does not now feel more and more of her influence, and is not now secretly—nay, openly—yearning after those very things which have been so long hated and despised. “Sectarianism,” and the “Sectarian Spirit,” are a stench in the nostrils of all the sects, without exception. Their own people loathe that meat which is all that their pastors have to break to them as the Bread of Life. The usages, which of old they most abhorred, they now resume, with more eagerness of enjoyment, indeed, than is often found among us. Sick of extemporaneous prayers, they are groping and feeling their way towards a Liturgy. They sing once more the Psalter to antiphonal chaunts. They stretch forth, and grasp each other’s hands, striving to create among themselves that unity which they have not, and for the want of which they know their souls to be faint and dying. On every side the disintegration of old organized enmities is going on. It seems almost

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as if the Church had been doing as was done of old at Jericho;—as if the priests of the LORD had already compassed the city seven times, and that at the blowing of their silver trumpets the buttresses of thick prejudices had crumbled away, and the massive walls of separation had fallen down flat, so that all now needed from the Israel of God was only to ascend up every man straight before him, and take the city. The whole is gradually yet rapidly opening up for easy conquest. And, therefore, no longer defence or apology, but *conquest* should henceforth be the chief instinct of her life. Let her grow, and gain, and ride on, conquering, and to conquer.

But to do this she must first herself be fully FREE. The feet of them that bring good tidings of good, how shall they be beautiful upon the mountains, how shall they go on, publishing salvation, so long as they are thus heavily laden with the fetters of a system that makes the Church a prisoner at home, in her own house? The hands that are stretched forth to deliver,—to bestow unto others that blessed liberty, with which CHRIST hath made us free—how shall they win the wicked world to receive the gift, so long as every motion rattles the manacles that yet encumber her arms;—manacles of heaviest lead, ever bearing those hands down to earth, when they should be spread up to heaven;—manacles of lead, yet thinly and shabbily gilded on the outside, to cheat fools into the belief that they are ornaments of gold, instead of the shackles of slavery? How shall the priests' trumpets be heard throughout all Jericho, if they take so

great pains to muffle up their soul-piereing sound, that it shall never be heard outside the canvas-walls of the little tents of Israel? No. Bring the trumpets out into the free air, that their notes may be borne on the wings of all the winds of heaven, and unto all, everywhere, that have ears to hear. Let the heart of the Church expand, and grow great with her glorious work, so that her swelling bosom shall snap asunder these new cords with which she is bound. Let her burst the fetters from her feet, and break in pieeces the gilded, moeking manacles from off her hands: and then she may be once more seen, beautiful upon the mountains, publishing peace. Then, and not till then, may she spread her loving arms, in triumph, to embrace a New World.

All the people are gathered together, weary of the cruel vanities of Baal. The day is far spent. The time of the offering of the Evening Sacrifice draweth nigh. The Altar of the LORD, that was broken down, is repaired. The sacrifice lies upon the Apostolic number of unmoving stones, ready for the sacred flame. Again, and again, and again, have our prophets drenched it through and through with cold water. Would God that Elijah were only here to call down *the fire!* And is he not promised unto us once more, “before the coming of the Great and Dreadful Day of the LORD?” And is not that Day now nigh at hand? Aye! *Once more* shall there fall Fire from Heaven! And *once more* shall ALL THE PEOPLE fall upon their faces, and say, “The LORD, He is the God; the LORD, He is the God!”

ARTICLE V.*

FROM THE

PARISH STATISTICS, AND FOURTH
ANNUAL ADDRESS

OF THE

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, ELIZABETH, N. J.

REV. EUGENE AUGUSTUS HOFFMAN, M. A.

Easter Monday, 1857.

WHEN the disciples of John the Baptist came to our Blessed Lord, saying, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" He bade them go and tell John what things they saw and heard: "how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised," and, as though He had reserved this for the last, because of its being the most conclusive proof of His Messiahship, "*to the poor the gospel is preached.*" And, on another occasion, when He stood up to read "in the synagogue, on the Sabbath day," He found the place, in the prophecy of Isaiah, where it was written, "The Spirit of

* This article is inserted as a favorable specimen of a Free Church *at work*, as well as for the argument which it presents in behalf of the cause. The parish, which is the third in the place, was organized in 1853, with twenty-five communicants. It now numbers about one hundred and thirty. They have a Daily Service, Weekly Communion, and two Parish schools in successful operation.

The system of District Visitors for the poor is thoroughly carried out. The expenses are met by the Weekly Offerings. In addition to about \$20,000 which have been paid for the chapel, rectory, school-house, and ground for the future Church, the offerings have amounted, for the four years respectively, to \$705,02; \$1,155,53; \$1,365,09; \$2,676,63. See further statistics on page 131.

the LORD is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me *to preach the gospel to the poor*;" and when He had closed the book, and the eyes of all were fastened on Him, "He began to say, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The preaching of the gospel to the poor was a sign of His Messiahship, and of the anointing of the Spirit of the LORD. And nothing is clearer than that a Church which is anointed by the LORD's Spirit, and animated by that zeal for doing good which filled the heart of the Redeemer of mankind, *must preach the gospel to the poor*.^{*} It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that the energetic spirit of life, which has sprung up during the last ten or fifteen years in our portion of the Church Catholic, should have directed itself to the solution of the great question, "How are we to evangelize the masses?" or, in one word, "How is the gospel to be preached to the poor?"

It is a question which must be met by the men of this generation. We are living in an age when the world, and all that appertains to it, is driven on at a pace which would have maddened the brain of our ancestors. Nations are born in a day. Cities spring up in a night. It is the age of emigration. The population of the world is driven hither and thither, by the desire of gold, or the lusts of the flesh, in numbers, in comparison with which, the Crusades were but child's play. The invention of the steam engine has gathered

^{*} "Glorious evidence of a Divine origin and mission—the same which the Church, the spouse of CHRIST, now appeals to in proof that she is of God, and not of the world."—Bishop H. Potter's Sermon at the Consecration of St. James' Church, Syracuse, New-York.

men into masses with almost the rapidity of an Arabian Nights' tale. And we of the American Church have responsibilities resting upon us which no branch of the Christian Church, since its foundation on Mount Olivet, ever had. A continent, teeming with the population of a nation not fourscore years of age, yet felt in every quarter of the globe, is before us to be evangelized. The Church of Rome, with all its manifold appliances and Jesuitical policy, is to be held in check. The spirit of infidelity, which has been wafted over the sea with the thousands of emigrants from neological Germany, is eating the very heart out of sectarianism. The masses of our population—the poor, who are our “hewers of wood and drawers of water,” but whose souls we have forgotten—are, practically, yet without the Word of Life. To them the gospel must be preached. They are to be brought into the Church, that they may be moulded into CHRIST. And through them, as turning the scale in all our popular elections, and influencing for good or for ill the nations of the world, we hold, as it were, its future religious destiny in our hands.

How then are we to evangelize these masses? How shall we preach the gospel to the poor?

It is an important question; as important as the way in which the gospel must be preached; as important as how the Church can fulfill her mission; too important to be entered upon on such an occasion as this. We commend it to your most earnest thoughts and fervent prayers as Christians, and Churchmen, and Churchwomen. And we pass to one point in

connection with it, in which you of this congregation are especially interested.

We have said, and we have seen nothing yet to change our opinion, that one of the *first* steps towards this result must be the establishment of Free Churches; both by the erection of more Churches in which the seats shall by some security be made for ever free, and the abandonment of the pew system wherever it is established, as soon as practicable.

But what do we mean by a Free Church? The name has been so frequently misunderstood, and confounded with other things, that it needs an answer.

A Free Church is not a Church *exclusively* for the poor. Churches built for this object, as though there were one heaven for the rich and another for the poor, deserve all the reprobation they have so justly received. God is no respecter of persons. We are all *one* in CHRIST JESUS. And woe unto that branch of the Church, which shall ever undertake to gather the rich and the poor into separate congregations.

Nor is it a Church whose worshippers contribute nothing towards its support. The honoring of the LORD with a portion of our substance, that our alms may go up with our prayers as a memorial before God, is a vital principle of the Gospel. A Free Church recognizes this in its most beautiful form, as it calls upon all to give, "not grudgingly or of necessity," but "as the LORD hath prospered them," be it much or little.

Nor is it merely a plan for supporting the work of the Church more successfully than any other mode.

Whether it do this or not; whether it can be made, as the phrase is, "to pay expenses," or not, does not affect the principle one jot or one tittle. Whether the men of this generation, who have been trained up under the pew system, can be brought to support Free Churches or not, should no more affect our efforts in their behalf, than the way in which the glad tidings of salvation are received by the world should affect its uncompromising proclamation.

A Free Church is, then, simply a Church where no seats are appropriated to the private or exclusive use of any individual, but all are open and free; a Church, where every man, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, can enter, without feeling that he is, in any sense, an intruder upon the rights of another; a Church where no compulsory payments are demanded for its support, but every one gives according as he is disposed in his heart; in one word, a Church where every one, the wayfaring man and the stranger as well as the home-born, the poor as well as the rich, is sure to find a welcome, and a place where he may pray to his Heavenly Father, and hear the glad tidings of salvation, whether he give much, or little, or nothing.

And why do we want such Churches? Because they are the only Churches which are in accordance with the simple idea of a Church as the House of God. The word Church, in its primary meaning, is simply the LORD's house: and hence, after its consecration, excludes the idea of any man's ownership in it. It is the LORD's, as one day in the week belongs to the LORD, and not to man. It is built for His worship. It

is consecrated to His service, and set apart from all worldly and unhallowed uses. It is dedicated to His use, in the use of all who will worship in it. It is hard to disconnect ourselves from prejudices with which we have grown up, and to throw ourselves sufficiently out of the circumstances by which we are surrounded, to look at such things with unbiassed minds. But divest yourselves for one moment, if you can, from present practices and arrangements. Suppose that God has a message to proclaim to the world—a message which concerns the salvation of all men, and which He would have delivered to all. Suppose that a house is to be built in which to deliver that message, and that part of that message is, that they to whom it is proclaimed, shall come to worship Him there. And then suppose that when the house is built and all things ready, some one should propose that the whole of its interior should be blocked off into little boxes or pews, and that they should be sold or hired only to those who were able to pay the most for them. What would be thought, and said, of the selfishness of the man who had the boldness to propose it? Would it not shut out the poor? Would it not proclaim, in language that could scarcely be mistaken, “This message of the LORD is only for the rich!” Could the house be called, in any sense, any other than the House of the God of the rich? Would it not seem like mockery to inscribe over its portals, “The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is maker of them all!” “My house shall be called an house of prayer for all nations!” And yet this is tolerated with scarce a murmur; and, more

than that, like all long-established abuses, upheld, as though it were right.*

To sell or to rent the seats in the House of God is destructive of the very idea of a Church as a house where God's people can worship Him without let or hindrance. It is to set up distinctions—the distinctions of worldly wealth—at the very foot of the cross. It is, as has been well said, to sell or to rent, not the privilege of worshipping in the Church—for this they could have without paying for it—but to sell or to rent *the privilege of keeping others out of certain parts of God's house*—the privilege of saying, “This is my pew, and you—my brother, as one God is our Father; my brother, as CHRIST hath redeemed us both; my brother, as made of one blood, but not so well-favored with this world's goods—must stand aside, and wait my convenience, and sit under my footstool while I am worshipping our common Father and partaking of our LORD's bounty, and must ask my permission before you can come and worship your Father in His own house.”

We want Free Churches, because the poor, God's poor, will not, and cannot if they would, come to Churches in which the pews are rented. Think of that sentence, “To the poor the gospel is preached,” and look around in any Church where there are pews,

* Imagine a Church, with rented pews, opened on a week-day at an hour to accommodate the poor, and the service being read for them while they are gathered in their own dark corners, separated from the minister by a block of empty pews with gilded prayer-books, reposing in their cushioned ease. No wonder that the school-room, or the open-seated lecture-room, has become a necessity for week-day services in such parishes.

and count the proportion of the poor, if, indeed, there are enough to count. Think of that sentence, "To the poor the gospel is preached," and tell me what means that taunt, so sadly true, that the Church is the Church of the rich. And then, still keeping that sentence in mind, go to the Free Churches of our communion and count the poor that are there, and see how of themselves they crowd into their open doors, and avail themselves of the privileges of their Father's house. See what it has done for us; and I can assure you, that it is but a sample of what it is doing everywhere throughout the land, where it has been fairly tried. This Chapel contains but *forty-two* benches or pews, and accommodates, without the aisle sittings, not quite *three hundred persons*. It was opened less than three years since. The congregation, small as it then was, was entirely composed of members of the learned professions, merchants, and those who were living on the income of their property. It was said to me, more than once, by some of the poor, before it was known that the seats in this Chapel were to be free, that they could not come here, because it would be only another Church for the rich. It was opened under prejudice from without. It has been the object of greater opposition than most Churches are called upon to endure in ten times three years. And yet, we have now on our register, as partly or wholly connected with us, *one hundred and forty-two* families—nearly three and a half to each pew—of whom, the heads of *one hundred and seven*, i. e. *three-fourths* of the whole number, are earning their daily bread by

the labor of their hands from day to day.* To say nothing of any other statistics, which show as gratifying progress in other respects, I think we may safely ask, where can the same be said of any pew-church, similarly located, in any part of the land.†

“We must not attempt to disguise the notorious fact, (wrote the present esteemed Provisional Bishop of New-York,) that the *pew system*, as commonly adopted in most of our Churches, and especially in the larger towns and cities, is a flagrant violation of the plainest principles of the Gospel. It is *not* such a system as ought to be adopted by those who profess to love God with all their heart, and their neighbor as themselves. ————— When we enter a crowded congregation where such a system prevails, what do we behold? We see all those parts of the sacred edifice which are conspicuous, which are comfortable, which offer advantages for seeing and hearing, *monopolized by the rich*, held exclusively as private property by the rich, fitted up by them with every luxurious accommodation; while the poor and the stranger, if they can gain admission at all, are thrust off into

* They are engaged in the following pursuits:

Seamstresses,	Shoemakers,	Factory-hands,
Day-laborers,	Painters,	Cabinet-makers,
Carpenters,	Piano-forte-makers,	Tailors,
Cartmen,	Wheelwrights,	Butchers,
Printers,	Grocers,	Masons,
Gardeners,	Carpet-weavers,	Bakers,
Farmers,	Servants,	Oystermen,
Sloop-captains,	Blacksmiths,	Coachsmiths,
Rail-road employees.		

† One-fourth of a congregation composed of the poor, has been claimed by the Rectors of pewed Churches, under favorable circumstances, as a large proportion

some remote corner, where there are few comforts, and where it is almost impossible to see or to hear; and thus we behold, at first glance, in that holy assembly, a spectacle which flatly contradicts all their professions of humility and charity, which is an insult to the most glorious attributes of the Being Whom they profess to honor and worship: Is it well that the lukewarm and the scoffer, on entering the House of God, should meet, at the very threshold, with such a practical demonstration of the worthlessness or of the inconsistency of Christian profession ?”*

We want Free Churches, because no Church that rents or sells its seats, can be, in any sense of the word worth talking about, a Missionary Church. Its doors are practically closed against all who cannot or will not purchase the right to enter. It asks men at the outset, how much they will *pay* to hear the Gospel preached. It provides no place for the poor, save, perhaps, a dark corner that will not rent. It makes the clergy too much the mere chaplains of close corporations, and is “eating the very life out of the Church.” And hence, we frankly lay the matter before you, and ask you, all who are able to do so, to assist us in the cause of Free Churches, for CHRIST’s sake, for the sake of His poor—the poor for whom He made Himself poor, and shed His precious blood—*His poor*, whom pews have driven first to the wall, then to the galleries, and then to the street, and then, what is worse still, to the loneliness and darkness of their own dilapidated dwellings. We ask it on the ground of principle.

* Remarks in favor of Free Churches, by Horatio Potter, D. D. 1845.

We are not willing in the light of such a cause to be led astray by the miserable, trifling objections which selfishness can put in the way. Nor are we patient, when the preaching of the Gospel is concerned, with those who halt to ask "whether it will pay." We say that we have hitherto wronged the poor. We have driven from our Churches the very men to whom it was our LORD's glory to preach. We claim that to the poor the Gospel is not preached, and sin must lie at our door. We ask you, as Christian men, to do, to dare something for their sake. We bid you think of Him Who for your sake became poor, of His whole life spent in doing good, of His mercy for the Magdalen and the penitent, of His daily companionship with the outcast and the sinner, of His love for the poor house of Mary and Martha, of His tender compassion for the poorest of our race, and of all that He endured for you, from that poor manger at Bethlehem to the sacrifice of the Cross, and say whether you can do too much for Him? And oh that, "whatsoever your hand findeth to do, you may do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest;" and "ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh."

But I have already detained you too long from the Statistics, which this Annual Address is expected to state. They are, for the year just ended, as follows :

78 Baptisms (13 adults, 65 infants).

22 Confirmed.

102 Communicants (5 deceased, 20 removed, 49 added).

3 Marriages.

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25	Burials.	
20	Sunday-school Teachers.	
220	Sunday-school Children.	
55	Classical and Parochial School Children.	
18	District Visitors.	

The offerings received during the year have been :

For the Support of the Clergy and Expenses of the Parish.	\$1,245	58
" " Poor*	457	64
" " Sunday Schools.....	132	06
" " Parochial Schools.....	93	02
" " Building Fund, to pay off floating debt of the Church	1,136	27
" " Missions of the Diocese.....	10	00
" " Domestic Missions of the Church, including \$52 50 for the Western Church Extension Society....	217	50
" " Foreign Missions of the Church.....	22	00
" " Episcopal Fund of the Diocese, (this year given directly to the Bishop for his own use).....	42	50
" " Infirm and Disabled Clergy of the Diocese.....	6	33
" " Gen. P. E. S. S. Union, and Church Book Society.	30	00
" Grace Church at the Port.....	20	00
" Sundry objects not-included in the above.....	400	00
Total.....	\$3,812	90
Or without the special effort to pay off the floating debt....	2,676	63

I feel called upon also, in consequence of hints that have been thrown out, to state, in justice to the parishioners and to the cause of Free Churches, that of the above offerings, not \$100 has been given personally by the Rector. The remainder, with the exception of some of the Special Offerings given by visitors and friends of the Parish, has been contributed entirely by members of the congregation.†

* There was also distributed 549 articles of clothing.

† We trust that the reader will bear in mind that these are the statistics of a Church seating only three hundred persons; a little less than one-half the number which a Parish Church ought to accommodate.

The most gratifying feature in the history of the parish during the past year, has been the effort to pay off its floating indebtedness. In the progress of erecting our buildings, and other expenses incident to the founding of a new parish, the Vestry, owing in part to unforeseen causes beyond their control, were unable to meet the whole outlay promptly, as they desired. A debt was created. Part of it was due to mechanics and part to borrowed money. In December last it was found to be, with the addition of interest, \$6,500; and it was of so unsettled a character that it gave the Vestry much greater annoyance than any of the congregation were aware. They had already given liberally towards the erection of the buildings, and some of them more than they could justly afford. The claims of the mechanics were pressing for payment, and those who were not friendly to Free Churches did not hesitate to say that the Church must be sold. The Vestry therefore determined to call a meeting of the parishioners, and to lay the matter before them. The meeting was held on the 30th of January, and though the weather was unfavorable and the attendance small, \$3,000 were pledged on the spot; a sum which has since been increased, in only two months, to \$5,000. Of this, \$2,098 57 has been paid in, and the remainder promised as rapidly as it is absolutely necessary. Such an effort, in a parish composed so largely of the poor, taken in hand as it has been by all classes of the congregation, and contributed in sums from twenty-five cents upwards, shows the hold which the Free Church system has upon the affections of

the people ; and proves, beyond a controversy, the liberality which it creates. "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give the praise." It needs now but a short continuance of the effort to entirely remove this indebtedness, and to place the Church on a secure foundation.*

Let us, beloved brethren, recognize the hand of God in this prosperous beginning of a work which should be so near to the heart of every Christian, by giving *ourselves* more fully to the LORD. Let us tell out the work of CHRIST in our hearts, by uniting in every good work. Let us "show out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom." Let us extort from the world the testimony which the early Christians wrung from their heathen persecutors, "See how these Christians love one another!" It is not costly Churches, nor music, nor eloquence, nor wealth alone, that evinces the true spirit of the Gospel which we preach. It is the disposition of each member of the congregation to give up himself, not only his means, but his time and his convenience, heartily as to the LORD, to the daily systematic work of the parish ; to search for the sick and the poor, that they may be relieved by the alms of the parishioners ; to bring little children to the Church, that they may be catechised up in the way they should go ; to seek out those who are living without God in the world, that they may be induced to come unto Him ; in one word, to strive in our station, and according to our ability, to be ever going about doing good—which shows the Spirit of the

* Shortly after this Address was in print the whole amount was pledged.

LORD within our hearts.* The Christian woman, Fabiola, who built the first hospital for the sick, and served in it with her own hands, gave an evidence of her religion which no man can despise. When the persecuting Roman Emperor, Decius, demanded of the Church in the imperial city that it should surrender its treasures, and the Clergy assembled the blind, the lame, the sick, and the poor, that were supported by the Church, and then called in the Emperor and said, "These are the treasures of the Church," they preached the Gospel of JESUS with a mute eloquence which no words could equal. And the spirit which has made the name of Florence Nightingale a household word by every Christian hearth, and animated a weak woman to give up the comforts of home to minister in the hospitals of Scutari, is a spirit which comes alone from Him Who for our sakes made Himself poor.

We should strive to cultivate the spirit of Christian brotherhood, especially among those who kneel with us before the same altar, and drink of the same cup—the spirit of sympathy and mutual love for all who are one with us in CHRIST JESUS, before which the coldness of the world fades away—the spirit of true charity, which rejoices in a brother's joy, and weeps with a brother's sorrow—the spirit of Christian love, which will do more than any benevolent society would

*It is impossible, with the present number of our Clergy, for them to do the work that is required for the Church. There ought to be in every parish one or more Deacons. The Rector has made since the first of January, in addition to all the services, over two hundred visits: and yet the work is not more than half done. I know no way to meet the *present necessity* unless the laity will assist their Pastors in the work of district visiting.

or could—the very “dew of Hermon which fell upon the hill of Sion,” where “the LORD promised His blessing, and life for evermore.”

We need to realize more fully the importance of sustaining our own Church institutions. The Church to which we belong makes no claim to be one of many modes of evangelizing the world. She claims to be the pure branch, in these United States, of the Catholic and Apostolic Church of CHRIST. And she is just this, or nothing at all. It is not, therefore, and cannot be, in the consistent Churchman's mind, a question whether he will do what he does for the cause of CHRIST after her pattern, or not. She is to him the channel of mercy to a fallen world. She possesses all that the LORD deemed necessary for the regeneration, and restoration, and sanctification of redeemed humanity to the perfect image of the Son of God. For us to work with other means, and to struggle in other ways to set forward the work of the LORD, is to be, not only not with her, but against her. As baptized members of her fold, we are pledged to do all that in us lies, in our own sphere and place, to set forward her operations. We are to feel, when another proposes to us some plan for her enlargement, or suggests some way in which we can aid her to fulfill her divine mission—whether it be to beautify the place of her sanctuary, or to maintain her cause of Christian education, or to send her missionaries to the farthest isles of the sea—not that it is merely *his work*, or a work which we may encourage or not as we please, but that it is *our work*—a work to which *we are bound* by the strongest

ties of our humanity—a work to which *we are pledged* by all that is sacred on earth, and to which, as *we* hope to be saved, *we must*, according to our station and ability, *give ourselves* so long as life shall last. And, oh ! if we did but realize this happy lesson, that the one great value of time is to treasure it up in eternity by spending it now for God, how would we rejoice at every newly-discovered way of doing good, whether it be by our means, our time, or our influence ; and the Church, which now goes bending and faltering to its work, would go forth as brightness, conquering and to conquer, until the earth is filled with the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

And now, but one word, on a practical point in connection with your offerings for the support of such a parish. The plan to be pursued with Free Churches, is precisely that which the Spirit of the LORD, by the mouth of the inspired Apostle, hath declared to be Divine. We lay aside lotteries and fairs and all their kindred schemes, as worldly devices for cheating men into charity, with which the Church can have nothing to do. We have no pew-rents, which others so much rely on ; nor yet do we urge special gatherings for the ordinary work of the Church. We rely simply on the Apostolic plan which St. Paul ordered for the Churches of Galatia and the disciples at Corinth : “ *Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*” You will observe that we say *ordered*, for the Apostle does

not write a mere recommendation or advice, but, "*as I have GIVEN ORDER to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye.*" And then, how full and precise his order, as to the time, and by whom, and in what proportion it is to be done." "*Upon the first day of the week,*" when the six days' work is done, and the hum of the world is hushed, and we are told of the mercies of redeeming love; "*let every one of you,*" not only men, but women and children, rich and poor, high and low, one with another, all who have been brought into the fold of CHRIST, and pardoned by His atoning blood; "*lay by him in store,*" put it into the treasury of the LORD, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and thieves do not break through and steal; and "*as God hath prospered him,*" according to the only just and equitable rule, which burdens no one, as it gathers of the rich man's abundance, and makes the widow's two mites, so that it be all that she hath, more than all the rest.

To lay aside the consideration that it is the divinely ordained plan for the support of the Gospel, and the system which universally obtained in the purest ages of the Church, there is no better way than the wit of man can devise. It is, at once, the simplest, the most certain, and the easiest to all concerned. *It is the simplest.* It requires no machinery. It costs nothing for collection. It demands no organization. It asks for no explanation. It can never be forgotten. Even the little children love it. *It is the most certain.* It makes no outcry to exalt any one charity out of its due importance. It forgets nothing. It comprehends

evrything for which the Church can ask, of worldly riches. It raises no spasmodic excitement to be followed by more than a Laodicean chill. It is as the dew which nightly falls from heaven, and the drops which swell the ocean. And *it is the easiest to all concerned*. It is the gathering by little, which no one feels.

The system, like all other things in the Church, meets the wants of the poor man, as well as those of the rich. It makes no great appeal to mock his poverty. It comes with no subscription-paper, with names in long array, to compel him to give just so much, or else be marked for want of liberality. It opens no channel for ostentation. It takes from no one grudgingly or of necessity. It simply asks, from week to week, according to each one's ability.

Beloved brethren, it rests with you to say whether it shall be so. Let each one give conscientiously, according to some fixed proportion, of the income with which God shall crown his lot. The Jew gave at least *one-tenth* every year for the support of his priesthood, and a thirtieth of all that remained to the poor. Heathens in every age have done the same. St. Paul enjoined this on the Corinthian Church as the Divine rule.* The primitive Christians never gave less. And many

* 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.—“Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the Temple, and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? *Even so hath the LORD ORDAINED* that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.” “The plain ordinance of CHRIST,” says the author of the immortal work on Ecclesiastical Polity, the “judicious” Richard Hooker, in commenting on this text, “appointeth as large and as ample proportion out of His own treasure unto them that serve Him in the Gospel as ever the priests of the law did enjoy. What further can we desire? It is the blessed Apostle's testimony, that *even so* the LORD hath ordained.”

of those whose praise, since the Reformation, has been in all the Churches, have systematically adopted the same rule.* Let each one, therefore, resolve to do according as he is able. Let no LORD'S day pass without laying something by him in the heavenly store. And rather than have one member of a family put a large sum into the plate, break it up in smaller sums, so that all, even little children, may have the privilege and learn their duty.

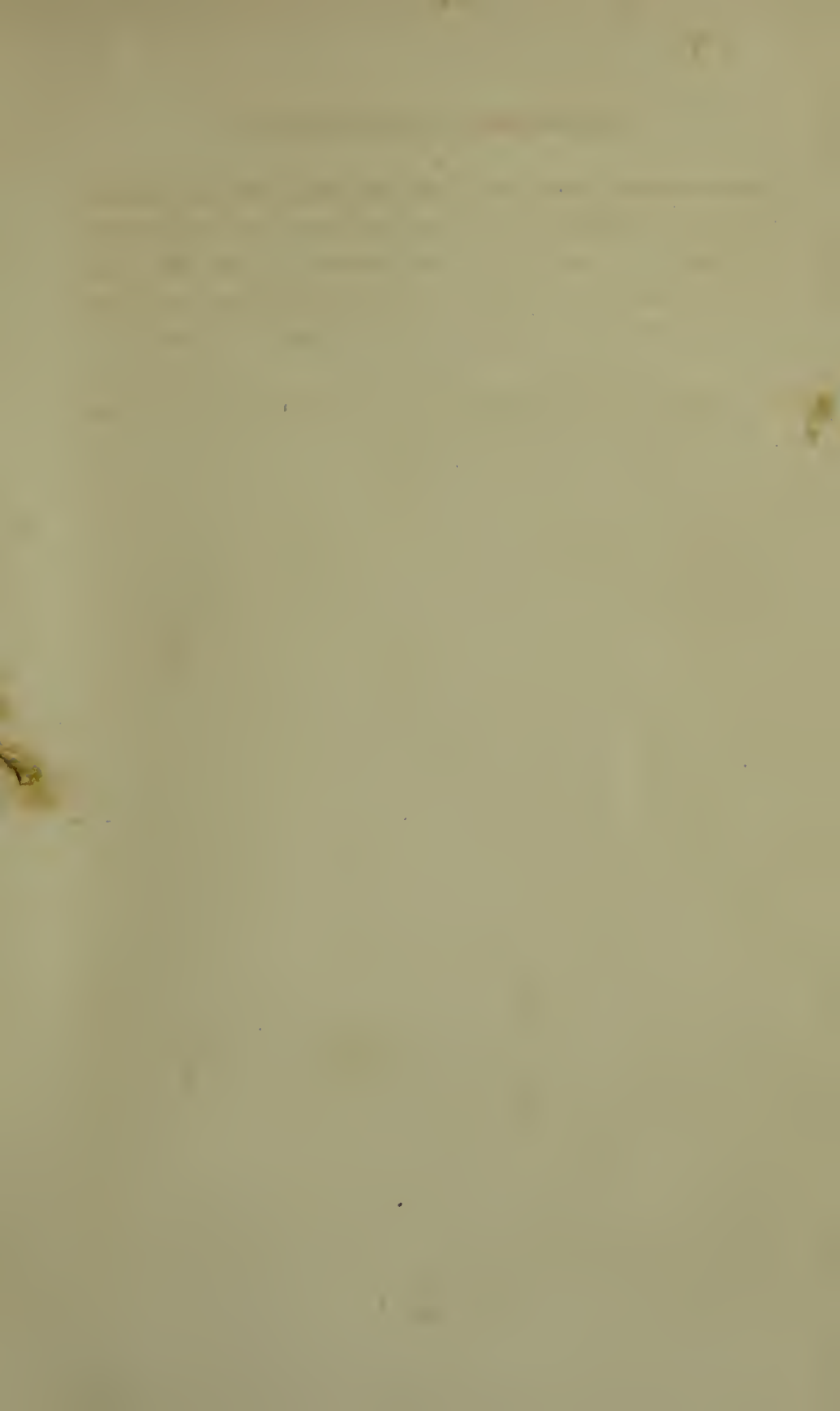
"Desire," in the words of a Sermon on Ancient Charity, by a living bishop, which has done more, under God, than aught else, to restore this primitive practice to our branch of the Church—"desire, with fervent prayers to God, for His dear Son's sake, a new outpouring of the ancient charity! That it may be so, give yourselves first to the LORD; then, like the Macedonian Christians, you will be willing of yourselves. Then, as to God and in His sight, the gift of every man will be according to his just ability. Then will your Christian joy run over, from the deepest poverty, with overflowing liberality. The beggarly appeal for CHRIST will then no more be heard. The spasm of an extorted charity will then no more be felt. The Church's hand, the offertory, with those simple sentences of God's own Word to His dear children, will then suffice to gather for the Church. The Church's alms—each member of it doing what he can, down to the widow's mite—distilling gently as the morning

* Sir Mathew Hale, Lord Chief Justice of England; the Rev. Dr. Hammond; the Rev. Dr. Annesley, the grandfather of John Wesley; Richard Baxter, the author of the *Saint's Rest*; Dr. Watts; Mrs. Rowe; the Rev. Dr. Doddridge, and many others.

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dew—shall clothe the valleys all with verdure, and surmount the bleakest hill-top with an emerald crown. Grant it to us, God of our salvation, for Thy dear Son's sake; and to Thee, the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, shall be the glory and the praise. Amen.”*

* Bishop Doane's Sermon on Ancient Charity, to which I am indebted for many of the thoughts in the latter part of this Address.



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